

TARTU UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Social Science

Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Chimelue A. Okoye

USING THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK TO ANALYZE EXTERNAL
PROMOTER'S ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS: THE CASE OF ROLAC IN NIGERIA
(2017–2023)

MA thesis

Supervisors: Kristina Muhhina, Thomas Micheal Linsenmaier

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby declare that I have prepared this thesis independently. All contributions and views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been referenced.

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Name: Chimelue A. Okoye

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Abstract

Corruption undermines ethical universalism, and institutional capacity, eroding democracy and exacerbating governance challenges, especially in developing countries. Multilateral efforts, such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) have been employed to tackle this menace in international fora. Such efforts emphasize capacity building, particularly in countries like Nigeria, where governance issues persist despite significant resources. Aligned with these efforts of institution capacity building, the EU-funded RoLAC program between 2017 to 2023 sought to strengthen governance and combat corruption in Nigeria. However, the country's Control of Corruption Index stagnated at -1.1 during this period, reflecting limited progress. To explain such trend, scholars have increasingly moved away from traditional approaches like donor coordination, which offer limited insights, toward examining the domestic realities of target countries, particularly within the European Neighborhood Policy (Börzel et al., 2010; Börzel and Pamuk 2011; Börzel and van Hüllen 2014; Kralikova, 2022). However, this perspective remains relatively underexplored in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Nigeria. This gap is significant, given that Nigeria is among the largest recipients of EU governance funding outside Europe (Hackenesch, 2016, p.26). Informed by political settlement scholarship which matches the target country's political and institutional dynamics with good-fit instruments (Levy, 2014; Muhhina, 2023; Roy, 2017), this study examines the impact of policy design elements, precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and degree of coerciveness, on the RoLAC program. Using qualitative coding of documents and expert interviews, the findings reveal that reliance on comprehensive, government-driven, and highly coercive policy instruments was ineffective in Nigeria's fragmented political landscape and weak institutional context, hindering RoLAC's success. These findings emphasize the practical necessity of aligning policy designs and tools with the unique political and institutional dynamics of target countries. External promoters like the EU should adopt tailored policy instruments to achieve meaningful governance improvements, ensuring compatibility with the local context for sustainable reform outcomes.

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List of Abbreviations

Administration of Criminal Justice - ACJ

Administration of Criminal Justice Laws - ACJL

Administration of Criminal Justice Act - ACJA

African, Caribbean, and Pacific – ACP

Anti-Corruption - AC

Anti-Corruption Agencies - ACAs

Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units - ACTUs

Awaiting Trial Persons - ATPs

Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment - XRCOMP

Competitiveness of Political Participation - PARCOMP

Department For International Development - DFID

Ethics and Compliance Scorecard - ECSC

Executive Constraints - XCONST

Economic and Financial Crime Commission - EFCC

European Development Fund - EDF

European Union - EU

European External Action Service – EEAS

Federal Capital Territory - FCT

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission – ICPC

Justice Sector Reform Teams - JSRT

Law Enforcement Agencies - LEAs

Limited Access Orders - LAOs

Ministries, Departments, and Agencies - MDAs

National Anti-Corruption Strategy - NACS

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons - NAP TIP

New Institutional Economics - NIE

Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative - NEITI

National Open Contracting Portal - NOCOPO

Nigerian Bar Association - NBA

Open Access Orders - OAOs

Openness of Executive Recruitment - XROPEN

Police Duty Solicitor Scheme - PDSS

Political Settlement - PS

Political Settlement Approach - PSA

Rule Of Law - ROL

Rule of Law and Anti-corruption - RoLAC

Sexual Assault Referral Centers - SARCs

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence - SGBV

United Nations Convention Against Corruption - UNCAC

Women, Children and Persons with disabilities - WCP

Introduction

The issue of corruption has been a global challenge faced by nations. In Nigeria, despite its wealth of human and natural resources, corruption has significantly impeded socio-economic development. This pervasive issue which involves misuse of public authority for private gain permeates all sectors of Nigerian society, including political, bureaucratic, criminal justice, and electoral systems (Omomowo, 2021). Acts such as fraud, budget padding, diverted contracts, and embezzlement often without the perpetrators facing consequences, have deeply affected the state's development (Bazuaye & Oriakhogba, 2016; Ocheje, 2017). Instances of citizens paying bribes to access government services are significant. For example, in 2023, over 700 billion naira in cash bribes were paid to public officials (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024, p.22). Regarding this, prosecutors are most likely to accept bribes, at a prevalence of 67 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024, p.68). Moreover, public officeholders have misappropriated public wealth resulting in inadequate basic amenities and a lack of affordable livelihoods (Obutte, 2016; Nwankwo, 2014). In public bureaucracies, bureaucrats inflate their wage bills and pay ghost workers, while military officers embezzle security funds, leaving the government with limited capacity to tackle crucial issues like security challenges, pensions, and unemployment (Ocheje, 2017, p.367). Additionally, favoritism, nepotism, and tribalism are prevalent in civil service, particularly in recruitment processes (National Bureau of Statistics & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019). This widespread corruption has significantly hindered the country's developmental goals (Ushie & Akwaji, 2021). Consequently, over 60% of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022), leading to increased demands from the public and non-governmental organizations for anti-corruption and institutional reforms (Kpae & Nwideeduh, 2018).

In response to these demands and the pervasive effects of corruption on the state, every administration since 1999's return to civil rule has embarked on anti-corruption campaigns and reforms. Notable among these efforts are the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002 (Eshiotse et al., 2021). These commissions are tasked with investigating and prosecuting financial crimes, including corruption, money laundering, and terrorist financing (Enweremadu, 2012). Despite these efforts and existing laws such as the Code

of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act of 1991 (Ocheje, 2017), corruption has built a seemingly impregnable wall of protection and defense around itself, making the fight against it an endless struggle (Eshiotse et al., 2021). The pervasive corruption in Nigeria has significantly hindered the nation's progress towards establishing a credible government and upholding law and order. This has, in turn, impeded the evolution of a stable democratic system and a social contract aimed at enhancing the welfare of its citizens (Omomowo, 2021). Thus, corruption continues to be among the top four most pressing problems afflicting the state, as reported by Nigerian citizens in a 2023 survey (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024, pp.60-61). This sentiment is mirrored in Nigeria's Control of Corruption Index, which has stagnated at -1.1 from 2017 to the present. The index, ranging from -2.5 to +2.5, with higher values indicating lower corruption (World Bank, 2024a), underscores the persistent challenges the country faces in tackling corruption effectively.

Addressing corruption has become a serious concern not only domestically but also in international fora. This agenda gained momentum in the 1990s in response to several global developments, notably the end of the Cold War and the global trend toward democratization (Lohaus & Gutterman, 2020, p.3). The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention of 1997 and the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption of 1996 are examples of international laws addressing this issue (Enweremadu, 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019). Moreover, since the early 2000s, illegal cross-border financial transactions and corruption have received urgent attention, partly due to the September 11 attacks. The latter prompted a renewed focus on preventing and combating illicit overseas transactions, with measures to fight money laundering becoming a top priority in policy circles of Western allies, as it was seen as an important source of terrorist financing (Enweremadu, 2012).

Furthermore, corruption is also seen as a threat to democratic institutions, economic development, escalating inequality, and the integrity of the international system of trade and investment (Ronceray & Sergejef, 2023). In this regard, there have been multilateral efforts to combat corruption such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) which Nigeria state has ratified in 2004. In addition, the country has partnered with the then G8 countries in a "Compact to Promote Transparency and Combat Corruption," (Opara, 2007, p.89). These international efforts embody a commitment to bolster capacity building specifically in developing countries, aiming to rectify institutional issues. Such efforts signify that building state capacity through anti-corruption reform plays a pivotal role in development cooperation (Mungiu-Pippidi,

2019), as the performance of any nation's economy is based on the strength and growth of its institutional capacity (Paul & Ofuebe, 2020, p.1). This reform is frequently viewed as an integral element of governance promotion, complementing electoral assistance and civil society support (Ronceray & Sergejef, 2023, p.1). These efforts collectively contribute to the establishment of norms such as equal individual rights, adherence to the rule of law, and responsive government (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019).

The European Union (EU)'s commitment to promote governance outside the union is in harmony with these efforts. The Union's norms of combating corruption through development programs and initiatives in third countries have been part and parcel of this commitment (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p.32). This is particularly evident in the EU's external relations and development policies in Africa, notably Nigeria (Hackensech, 2016, pp. 9-10). Since 2005, the EU has been a significant supporter of Nigeria's anti-corruption initiatives, contributing €88 million by 2023 and maintaining a leading role in funding the state's criminal justice sector (European External Action Service [EEAS], 2023). Nigeria equally ranks as the second-largest recipient of EU governance aid outside Europe, receiving a total of 453 million dollars from 2005 to 2014 (Hackensech, 2016, p.26). Thus, promoting governance reforms has remained central to the EU's strategy of engagement in Nigeria (European Commission, 2022). Central to this governance aid is the European Development Fund (EDF), which channels development cooperation aid to African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) States, and Overseas countries and territories (European Union, n.d.). The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) program in Nigeria, part of the 11th EDF from 2014 to 2021 allocated to the state, exemplifies the EU's commitment. Accordingly, the RoLAC program implemented by the British Council between 2017 to 2023 aims to strengthen governance and transparency, uphold human rights, promote inclusivity, and combat corruption (British Council, n.d.-a). The program's primary goal is to promote good governance in Nigeria by strengthening the rule of law and reducing corruption, both of which are critical for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice, and accountable governance (Ronceray & Sergejef, 2023).

The RoLAC program plays a pivotal role in supporting Nigeria's governmental efforts, particularly as the fight against corruption has been prioritized as a key national development policy objective in alignment with the country's international obligations. However, the state continues to rank poorly on global corruption indices and scores below average in assessments of its legal

framework. For instance, Transparency International reports a decline in Nigeria's Corruption Perception Index from 27% in 2017 and 2018 to around 24%-25% in recent years (Transparency International, 2024). Similarly, according to the World Justice Project (2024), the country's performance in the rule of law score has declined from 0.44/0.43 out of 1 between 2017 and 2019 to 0.41 between 2021 and 2023. Of particular concern is Nigeria's lowest performance in the indicator measuring the absence of corruption within the rule of law framework (World Justice Project, 2024). Report indicates persistent challenges, notably within the criminal justice system, which remains significantly affected by corruption (Transparency International, 2024). These trends suggest that despite the substantial support provided by the European Union through the RoLAC initiative, Nigeria continues to fall short of the standards and requirements of an effective anticorruption regime as embodied in regional and global anti-corruption conventions, particularly the UNCAC 2003.

A variety of factors has shaped the promotion of EU governance initiatives in third countries. Scholars such as Khakee (2007), Emmanuel (2010), and van Cranenburgh (2019) emphasize trade dependency, donor coordination, and stability-security nexus as pivotal influences on the landscape of governance promotion. In contrast, Borzel et al. (2010) elaborate that the EU's strategy hinges on fostering partnerships and ensuring joint ownership, which tends to be effective when governments are willing to embrace reform or when the benefits outweigh the costs. They note that if corruption and poor governance are deeply rooted within a country's political and economic systems, the success of EU initiatives can be severely limited (Borzel et al., 2010, p.143). This argument suggests that the target countries' political environment plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of EU governance promotion efforts. While scholarly attention has explored how this factor shapes EU anti-corruption initiatives in target countries (Börzel & Pamuk, 2011; Kralikova, 2022), its impacts on EU initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, remain relatively under-researched.

Against this background, this study aims to address this gap. In its objective, the study employs the political settlement perspective to examine what factors impacted the EU governance promotion efforts particularly the RoLAC program in Nigeria. This perspective places political dynamics at the core of governance promotion, highlighting the specific incentives and constraints that influence the pathways and outcomes of institutional development in the context of a

developing country (Muhhina, 2023, p.437). In this regard, it highlights that ambitious RoLAC reforms that do not take into account the political settlement are likely to be met with limited success (Roy, 2017). While anti-corruption strategies aim to reshape incentives for improved developmental outcomes, the tools chosen for these initiatives may sometimes conflict with the prevailing political environment, limiting their impact. By bringing the politics of the target country to the forefront of the analysis, the political settlement framework clarifies what is obtainable in specific contexts, whether in dominant party or competitive environments, and how it shapes institutional and developmental outcomes, including anti-corruption initiatives. This perspective transcends beyond theoretical discourse, offering a practical framework to analyze how policy designs and tools interact with the unique conditions of the target country. Consequently, this understanding is critical for tailoring governance reforms that are both effective and context-specific, ensuring they align with the unique constraints and capacities of political institutions in practice (Hackenesch, 2016).

In what follows, the study employs the following research question, which serves as the focal point of its analysis: *How can the political settlements analysis explain the limited success of the RoLAC program in Nigeria's criminal justice system between 2017-2023?* To assess the explanations behind the limited success of the RoLAC program, this study draws on qualitative data gathered from primary documents and reports, along with insights from 3 interviews with experts involved in the RoLAC program in Nigeria and active in anti-corruption initiatives.

In answering the question, this study employs the political settlement framework to shed light on the political and institutional challenges that shape development outcomes. Building on insights from political settlement literature, this approach highlights how the interplay between power configurations and institutional arrangements influences reforms (Muhhina, 2023; Kelsall et al., 2022). In dominant political settlements, where ruling elites face low vulnerability (Khan, 2010), investment in bureaucratic capacity can effectively regulate both elite and citizen behavior. However, this dynamic can deteriorate in predatory regimes, especially when policies are tied to political liberalization (Muhhina, 2023; Hickey & Hossain, 2019). Conversely, in competitive political settlements, where there's low elite cohesion and high inter-elite competition, institutions can reinforce patronage politics or support meritocratic public service systems based on the level of state capacity (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). These distinctions underscore the importance of

tailoring governance reforms to specific political contexts. Governance promotion instruments are not neutral; they are shaped by the unique context of their environments. Accordingly, scholars have identified ways to align policy designs with different political settlements (Levy, 2014; Muhhina, 2023; Roy, 2017). Key elements in designing effective initiatives include precision in targeting, which determines whether reforms adopt comprehensive or incremental approaches; actor involvement, which assesses whether initiatives focus on government actors or engage multistakeholder arrangements; and methods of influence, which evaluate whether strategies rely on less coercive or highly coercive tools to shape public action. Drawing on the political settlement literature, this study situates the RoLAC program within a competitive-personalized political settlement and hypothesizes that *“in a competitive-personalized settlement anti-corruption initiatives are more likely to succeed if they are targeted incrementally rather than comprehensively, implemented through multistakeholder arrangements rather than government structures, and designed in a low coercive manner rather than being a high coercive one.”*

The study uses a case study design, focusing on the RoLAC program as it exemplifies a good governance initiative implemented within a competitive-personalized settlement. Its relative importance lies in being part of the EU’s governance efforts to assist the Nigerian government in combating corruption, promoting human rights, and fostering inclusivity, key priorities for every administration since 1999. Additionally, the program is crucial in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Ronceray & Sergejef, 2023). This study specifically focuses on the first phase of the RoLAC program (2017–2023) because it is complete, and data is available for analysis. Moreover, the second phase, starting in 2023, is being implemented by a different organization, which may result in different modalities.

The study has six chapters and proceeds as follows. The first chapter uncovers the literature on the complexities surrounding anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. Following this, the study situates itself within the existing literature on EU good governance and defines the issue of concern. The second chapter elaborates and outlines the political settlement approach which guides the study’s analysis. The third chapter explains the research design and situates the study as a single case. It equally describes the main sources of the data for the study and explains the method of data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter provides the empirical analysis of the RoLAC program through an assessment of document analysis and interview responses, examining the hypothetical factors for

its outcome. Then the fifth chapter, which is the discussion section, discusses the results of the study and implications for further research and policy areas. Lastly, the sixth chapter, which serves as the conclusion, summarizes the findings and highlights the broader significance of these results.

1. Literature Review: The Complex Landscape of Anti-corruption Efforts in Nigeria

This chapter starts by exploring the complexities surrounding anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. It then shifts briefly to explain the EU's role in governance promotion before examining the literature on the factors influencing EU governance initiatives in third countries. In what follows, it defines the issue that the study seeks to examine and concludes by introducing the political settlement framework.

Corruption poses significant challenges to both international and domestic development, prompting the adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) by the UN General Assembly on October 31, 2003, which came into force on December 14, 2005 (Stahn, 2013, p.11). The UNCAC focuses on encouraging countries to implement policies and practices aimed at criminalizing and preventing corruption, recovering assets, and fostering international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of corruption-related offenses. Nigeria ratified the UNCAC in 2004, recognizing the severe impact of corruption since its independence in 1960 (Seun, 2019). Despite this, the implementation of UNCAC has been weak due to systematic corruption characterized by a lack of political will, poor ethics, and conflicts of interest (Seun, 2019, pp.672-673). Supporting this view, Ocheje (2017) highlights that colonial legacy and social norms driving systematic corruption in Nigeria hamper anti-corruption efforts. Simply put, the struggle for national resources and public offices along ethnic, regional, and religious lines fosters a mentality where government positions are viewed as opportunities for preferential allocation of resources. Consequently, this norm has limited anti-corruption measures (Nkpe, 2021).

While this norm is critical, the country's political landscape poses significant challenges to anti-corruption and rule-of-law efforts. This is evident in the institutional deficiencies driven by limited

capacity and elite maneuvering, which exacerbate the challenges of addressing corruption. Despite reform promises, each administration since 1999 has often manipulated the law to sustain corruption and protect elite interests (Omomowo, 2021). This pattern underscores that administrative changes alone are insufficient to ensure effective control of corruption, emphasizing the need for a permanent and robust capacity to uphold the rule of law (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, pp. 37-38). Moreover, political interference has significantly weakened anti-corruption efforts in the country, particularly in the appointment processes of judiciary heads and anti-corruption agency leaders. These appointments often result in agencies being used as tools for political vendettas (Paul & Ofuebe, 2020, pp. 53-54). As a result, anti-corruption strategies are frequently employed to target and disempower political opponents, fostering negative public perceptions of these efforts. In addition, the inability to separate political and bureaucratic spheres has created a regulatory framework centered on rent extraction, ultimately diminishing the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives.

The media and legal frameworks, essential for enhancing anti-corruption efforts through transparency and accountability, face significant challenges in Nigeria. Corruption-related stories are frequently distorted or ignored due to media professionals' limited access to critical information (Àkànle et al., 2021). This information imbalance prevents accountability and undermines the ability to expose publicly, and shame individuals involved in corruption, further hindering the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. Moreover, weak legal frameworks play a crucial role in hindering effective anti-corruption measures. In Nigeria, existing legal instruments often lack sufficient deterrent effects and impose lenient punishments, thereby undermining institutional mechanisms designed to combat corruption (Aborisade, 2021; Eshiotse et al., 2021). In addition to these domestic challenges, external factors exacerbate the situation. For instance, the lengthy litigation processes involved in recovering assets held in foreign safe havens further complicate Nigeria's anti-corruption initiatives (Enweremadu, 2012; Khakee, 2007; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019). Such concern is summarized in the statement by one of the advisers of the former president of Nigeria, “there are no thieves without receivers. Without safe havens for looted funds, Nigeria and Africa will not be corrupt” (European Commission, 2022, p.138).

In summary, Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape is complex, and shaped by various factors including social norms, political interference, weak legal frameworks, and external factors.

Although there is an extensive discourse about the complexity of the anticorruption landscape in Nigeria, the literature covering the initiatives from external promoters like the EU is relatively underexplored. Following this, the next section gives an overview of the factors influencing the EU governance promotion particularly anti-corruption efforts in third countries.

1.1. The EU in the Field of Governance Promotion

Since the post-Cold War era, international efforts to assist developing countries in addressing institutional deficiencies have grown. In this regard, the European Union (EU) has been a major actor. Unlike other regional organizations, the EU has focused on transforming domestic governance institutions beyond its borders, targeting accession candidates, neighboring countries, and third states alike (van Hüllen & Börzel, 2013). The Union's values of liberal democracy, articulated in Article 2(5) of the Treaty of Lisbon, have shaped its role in promoting governance (Bountagkidis et al., 2015, p.88). Börzel et al. (2010, p.137) note that the EU legitimizes the promotion of governance by framing it as an international norm, where progress in economics, the rule of law, and political liberalization are mutually reinforcing (Hanau Santini & Hassan, 2012). Echoing a comparable view, Bountagkidis et al. (2015, p.88) observe that EU actors have actively worked to position the union as a positive force by promoting its core norms through its external policy globally. These principles are evident in the European Commission's 2011 Agenda for Change, which emphasizes good governance as effective and democratic governance, focusing on transparency, accountability, control of corruption, human rights, and democracy (Hackenesch, 2016).

1.1.1. Factors influencing the EU's governance promotion in Third Countries

Since the third wave of democratization, governance promotion has become a recurring theme in academic discourse. To better understand this concept, this study draws inspiration from Börzel et al. (2013, p.6) to define governance promotion as the explicit and intentional effort by regional organizations to create and modify governance institutions in member states or third countries. Governance institutions, in this context, are norms, rules, and procedures that underpin the provision of collective goods and collectively binding rules. In promoting these norms, regional organizations try to influence target countries through various mechanisms, recognizing their

limited power in ensuring the adoption and implementation of these norms. Such mechanisms include litigation and military force (coercion), sanctions and rewards (incentives), assistance (capacity-building), and dialogue and exchange (persuasion and socialization) (Börzel et al., 2010, pp.130-131; Börzel et al., 2013, p.8). However, promoters generally prefer using instruments other than coercion, especially given the discredit associated with the use of force (Bridoux & Kurki, 2014).

In its relations with third countries, the European Union leverages development cooperation to promote norms of governance. Börzel et al. (2013, p.5) note that development cooperation has become a primary tool not only for providing goods and services in target countries but also for promoting governance, such as the rule of law and democracy. This usage of development cooperation for governance promotion is evident in the EU-Africa relation. Before the Samoa Agreement in 2023, the Cotonou Agreement served as the institutional framework governing the negotiation of reform priorities and measures to be implemented between the European Union and Africa (Bountagkidis et al., 2015, p.90). This Agreement covers developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (the ACP countries) and primarily focuses on development cooperation (Leroy, 2009, p.6). Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement introduced a political dialogue to exchange information, foster understanding, and establish priorities (Del Biondo, 2012, p.29). Moreover, the agreement provides the possibility of the use of sanctions in case of human rights violations. This is evident in Articles 9(2) and 96 which stipulate that if a party to the Agreement fails to duly respect human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law, a special procedure may be initiated which ultimately may lead to the introduction of sanctions against the party violating these principles (Del Biondo, 2012, p.27; Stahn, 2013, pp.58-59).

The Cotonou Agreement played a key role in promoting control of corruption by emphasizing it as a key factor for consultations and sanctions. Article 97(1) allows sanctions for corruption affecting policies with significant EU financial involvement, however, the 2005 revision extends these measures to any country where corruption impedes development, not just those directly involving EU funds (Stahn, 2013, p.59). However, the implementation of sanctions has been poor, with limited application, particularly in Africa (Stahn, 2013). Factors such as trade dependency, security interests, and donor coordination issues have influenced the effective application of sanctions in EU-Africa relations (Dandashly, 2018; Emmanuel, 2010; Khakee, 2007). These

highlight challenges in using sanctions as a conditionality framework for governance promotion in Africa (Börzel & Hackenesch, 2013). Moreover, the internalization of political conditionality in EU countries also shapes the application of sanctions. Here, opinions from different domestic actors in EU countries like bureaucracies, and media have an impact on the use of sanction framework in African countries (de Felice 2015; Grünfeld et al., 2014). Overall, these streams of literature illustrate how the landscape of governance promotion, particularly in the control of corruption and adherence to the rule of law, is explained using conventional approaches like donor's security and stability interest (Del Biondo, 2015).

However, the EU's efforts to promote governance, particularly anti-corruption efforts through its development cooperation, have sparked significant debate, particularly because conventional approaches focusing on external actors offer limited insight into the factors influencing these efforts in third countries. Borzel and van Hüllen (2014, p.5) note that scholarly literature has remained skeptical concerning the extent to which external actors can induce domestic change. The argument here is that since the EU's strategy emphasizes partnership and cooperation (Borzel et al., 2010), this approach allows partner countries to selectively engage with promoters, especially in an international context where sovereignty is crucial. Thus, improving domestic governance with external support is challenging due to various contextual factors that can either facilitate or hinder such initiatives.

These factors have gained significance in research on the European Neighborhood Policy, particularly in anti-corruption efforts. Borzel et al. (2010, p.143) note that this cooperative approach is effective primarily when governments are already inclined toward reform or when the benefits of reform significantly outweigh its costs. Similarly, Börzel and Pamuk (2011, p.5) highlight that the domestic changes observed in the Southern Caucasus region were less driven by pressure from the EU and more by the incumbent regimes' exploitation of Brussels' anti-corruption initiatives to consolidate their power. Supporting this view with the cases of Georgia and Armenia, Börzel and van Hüllen (2014, p.5) note that for EU-promoted anti-corruption efforts to be effective, they need to resonate with the social belief in the target state in public integrity, government impartiality, and universal access to public resources. Recent research also resonates with this perspective, showing that EU anti-corruption measures in Ukraine face significant challenges when they conflict with entrenched (in)formal institutions that benefit powerful

domestic actors (Kralikova, 2022, p.256). In summary, this stream of literature indicates that the local political environment is crucial in determining the effectiveness of EU efforts.

1.2. Defining the Issue

In sub-Saharan Africa, much of the literature on EU governance promotion typically examines the interaction between donors and recipients through a conventional International Relations lens (Del Biondo, 2012; Del Biondo, 2015; de Felice 2015; Dipama & Dal, 2015; Emmanuel, 2010; Khakee, 2007), predominantly neglecting the local context and conditions in target states. However, there are exceptions to this conventionally focused debate. Notably, Hackenesch (2015a, 2015b, 2018) shifts the focus from the promoters to the political dynamics within recipient countries, exploring domestic factors that shape these promotion efforts including the influence of China in the region. Here, Hackenesch (2015b, p.94) argues that promoters need to understand the domestic logic of political survival in authoritarian regimes. Her recent study asserts that the level of challenge to regime survival in dominant party political environments significantly shapes governments' willingness to engage external promoters (Hackenesch, 2018, p.198). In this context, she argues that China's influence on promoters varies, however, authoritarian leaders, cognizant of internal political dynamics, are often driven by a fear of being ousted (Hackenesch, 2018, p.198). To maintain power, they must address challenges to their survival from both internal and external sources. These studies suggest that domestic actors are not merely passive translators of initiatives, but they actively participate in shaping the efforts of governance promoters. Thus, promoters advocating for political liberalization challenge the tendency of African governments to cling to power, which in turn might face challenges that can impact governance reforms.

From this perspective, it is necessary to take into account the political dynamics within the recipient country when advancing governance promotion, a theme that this study seeks to further develop. This study acknowledges the significant influence of local political dynamics on external promoters' efforts to promote governance (Börzel et al., 2010; Börzel and Pamuk 2011; Börzel and van Hüllen 2014; Kralikova, 2022), an aspect that has received relatively limited attention in sub-Saharan African (Hackenesch, 2018, p.10). The rationale behind this approach lies in recognizing that governance promotion is a highly politicized and intricate process. Since politics dictates how

resources are utilized and distributed, as well as which policies are formulated and implemented (Unsworth, 2009), there is a growing need to pay attention to and gain a better understanding of the environments in which governance promotions are taking place.

While it is known that local political environments influence the EU's governance promotion efforts, it remains uncertain whether this holds for Nigeria. Furthermore, while research on anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria has examined domestic factors contributing to systemic corruption, it has not yet explored the complex interplay between power dynamics, institutional structures, and external initiatives, such as those promoted by the EU. Consequently, this study adopts the political settlement approach to examine and explain these dynamics. This approach extends beyond Hackenesch's main focus on dominant party regimes, where a hegemonic party dominates the political and economic life of a country (Hackenesch, 2018, p.6). While her focus provides valuable insights into how the survival strategies of dominant political leadership can undermine the efforts of promoters for good governance within a specific context, more attention is needed on the situation in competitive political leadership spaces (Hackenesch, 2018, p.220). Thus, this study adopts a locally conditioned perspective and aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse by placing political dynamics at the center of governance promotion initiatives, highlighting how the choice of policy tools or designs influences and constrains the outcomes of such initiatives in target countries like Nigeria. Building on this, the next chapter introduces and develops the political settlement approach, which offers the theoretical proposition that informs this study.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Framework of Political Settlement in Developmental Studies

This chapter begins by exploring the foundation of the political settlement approach (PSA). It then conceptualizes the framework and its key components. Next, it connects the framework to good governance promotion and, finally, develops the hypotheses that will guide the analysis of this study.

In recent years, the political settlement approach has become increasingly influential in the fields of peace and conflict studies as well as development studies. In academic discourses, it has gained analytical relevance due to its potential to explain why conflict occurs and state collapse, different

development pathways, and how to better fit development policy to the country's context (Kelshall, 2018). However, the terminology of political settlement has been deployed in many ways. Reiterating this, Ingram (2014, p.3) observes that the concept of political settlement has acquired three distinct yet overlapping meanings. One such conceptualization is that political settlement refers to either a negotiated settlement to end interstate or intrastate armed conflict (Ingram, 2014, p.3; Kelshall et al., 2022, p.4). Such an instance of this is Article 6 of the United Nations which is entitled, 'Pacific Settlement of Disputes' and the expansion of international peacekeeping (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.4). This political settlement meaning has the widest currency within international relations and peace literature (Ingram, 2014, p.3). Moreover, it is often referred to as the new and transforming political order that emerged at the end of the crisis (Behuria, 2017 et al., p.507). Here, warring parties or elite factions deliberately reorganized their relations by negotiating a compromise on their most basic disagreements (Burton & Higley, 1987, p.295 cited in Kelshall et al., 2022, p.4). According to Ingram (2014, p.3) such meaning of the concept is found in a small body of comparative politics literature.

In the realm of development studies, the term 'political settlement' has a distinctive meaning which is the central subject of this study. In this field, political settlement is seen as a discreet political economy analytical framework that provides a novel way of understanding the drivers and outcomes of contemporary socioeconomic and governance change (Behuria et al., 2017, p. 507). Here, the focus is on understanding the power relations and elite bargaining that exist in a polity, its interplay with (in)formal institutions, and how such dynamics shape institutional and policy outcomes. In this manner, the political settlement analysis framework is seen as a valuable counterbalance to the conventional approaches to the study of good governance promotion (Kelshall, 2018, p.6), especially as it emphasizes the importance of the element of the informal institution. According to Ingram (2014, p.6), this third meaning originally appeared in a handful of works in historical sociology and political economy in the 1990s. However, it was Mushtaq Khan's work in the mid-1990s that advanced this approach (Behuria et al., 2017; Hickey & Hockey, 2019). Khan challenged the explanations of new institutional economics (NIE) for state failure in developing countries (Ingram, 2014, p.6; Goodfellow, 2017, p.202). The NIE approach explained differences in institutional performance in terms of institutional structure, however, Khan argued that the institutions' performance was not just dependent on the character of the institution (Ingram, 2014, p.6). Here, he emphasized the importance of identifying who benefits

from a particular rights structure and who can obstruct potential growth-enhancing changes (Di John & Putzel, 2009, p.9; Kelshall et al., 2022, p.5).

Simply put, the NIE failed to engage fully with informal institutions and how these relate to formal ones such as legally enshrined property rights, as well as how the specific nature of late capitalism shapes the power relations that underpin institutional arrangements (Goodfellow, 2018, p.202). The central argument here is that institutions exist to support capitalism and work in such societies because they reflect a power structure shaped to a significant degree by capitalist profits (Gray, 2016 cited in Goodfellow, 2018, p.202). However, in developing countries, these formal institutions are often weak and do not serve the interests of powerful groups (Khan, 2010). In these contexts, powerful groups derive their influence from informal sources, such as control over land, coercive power, or traditional authority (Goodfellow, 2018, p.202). This leads to a "mismatch" between the scope and productivity of activities protected by formal institutions and the actual distribution of power (Khan, 2010, p.30). Informal institutions, therefore, play a crucial role in addressing this mismatch, contributing to political stability by ensuring that benefits accrue to powerful groups. In turn, they shape the functioning of formal institutions (Khan, 2018). This perspective is critical when examining governance and development in developing countries, as understanding the interplay between power relations and institutional outcomes is key to addressing state-building challenges.

Such understanding transcends the realm of theoretical discourse and emerges as a pragmatic imperative. It helps to navigate the intricate web of relationships and influences that determine how resources are allocated, decisions are made, and policies are implemented. Without this understanding, efforts at state-building by donors and promoters of governance reform may be misguided or ineffective. Consequently, this has prompted international development organizations to focus on political economy issues and integrate the PSA into their research agendas. These agendas, driven by donors since the works of Khan, aim to understand the politics of development, focusing on governance and institutions in weak, fragile, and conflict-affected settings (Behuria et al., 2017, p.509; Kelshall et al., 2022, p.6). This focus has led to the establishment of numerous donor-funded research centers. These centers strive to define and operationalize the PSA within international development (Behuria et al., 2017). A notable example is the work of James Putzel and Jonathan Di John at The Crisis States Research Centre in 2009,

which helped define political settlement by drawing from the work of Khan (Behuria et al., 2017, p.509; Kelshall et al., 2022, p.6). Their contributions inspired the work of the Department For International Development (DFID)'s Crisis States Research Programme Consortium in 2012 and the World Bank Development Report in 2011 (Kelshall et al., 2022, pp. 6-7).

Furthermore, the works of Adrian Leftwich, the founding Director of Research of the Developmental Leadership Program, contributed to popularizing the term of political settlement (Behuria et al., 2017, p.509; Ingram, 2014, p.6). More recently, the term has dominated projects of the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Center, which is part of the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester (Hossian & Hickey, 2019). This center has produced the largest body of political settlements-inspired empirical research to date (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.15). Their projects aim to identify the political conditions under which elites become committed, and states become capable of delivering inclusive development and governance outcomes (Hossian & Hickey, 2019). Consequently, these works aim to reintroduce politics into development policy and advance the understanding of development as fundamentally a political process (Kelshall et al., 2022).

The PSA, which reintroduces politics into development policy, has shed light on the political and economic obstacles affecting institutional development in developing nations. Moreover, this approach builds on the work of post-institutional turn in development studies. In development studies, a central inquiry is paramount which concerns the disparities in development among countries (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.8). In answering this question, the new institutional economic approach notes that the nature of the economic institution has a huge influence on such differences (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.8). Here, economic institutions are a better predictor of growth differences among countries than other factors such as geography and culture. However, they emphasize that economic institutions are not standalone entities; they are the product of political power (Acemoglu et al., 2004). In essence, they posit that economic institutions are shaped by groups wielding political power, derived from both de facto power (e.g., strikes, demonstrations, violent acts) and de jure power (formal political rules) (Acemoglu et al., 2004; Kelshall et al., 2022). This dynamic creates a cycle where dominant groups maintain their privileges by shaping economic and political institutions to secure their advantage. Stability endures until significant changes disrupt the balance of power, leading to struggles for new institutional arrangements.

This disruption can arise from either technological or economic changes; or violent conflict. Regarding the latter, North et al., 2009 (as cited in Kelshall et al., 2022, p.10) critique the disconnection in social science between economic and political development, attributing it to inadequate consideration of violence. They argue that how societies address the threat of violence fundamentally shapes the nature of human interactions, including political and economic systems (North et al., 2009 as cited in Kelshall et al., 2022, p.10). Their analysis suggests that societies can manage violence through “Limited Access Orders” (LAOs), where powerful elites negotiate the distribution of economic rents such as taxes and aid among themselves (North et al., 2009 as cited in Kelshall et al., 2022, p.10). This ensures their stake in the system and reduces incentives for violence (Kelshall et al., 2022). Thus, a settlement is achieved as all LAOs "share the basic principle of manipulating the economy to produce rent stability and prevent violence" (North et al., 2007, p.9 as cited in Frederiksen, 2019, p.163). However, while this approach maintains stability, it restricts competition, efficiency, innovation, and change due to its selective allocation of rights and entitlements. In addition, such an order raises the concern that those who benefit economically often undermine the political playing field (Ademmer et al., 2020, p.194). In contrast, Open Access Orders (OAOs), characterized by impersonal rights and unrestricted competition, foster innovation and economic growth by enabling broader participation and preventing the abuse of economic power for political purposes (Ademmer et al., 2020, p.194). Political competition and open access to political resources, such as executive, legislative, and judicial power, prevent the misuse of political power to manipulate the economy (Ademmer et al., 2020, p.194). In this analysis, power relations and institutions are intertwined (Ademmer et al., 2020; Kelshall et al., 2022).

2.1. Definition of Political Settlement, and Constitutive Elements

The political settlement approach builds on this interaction between political dynamics and institutions, but it also underscores the significance of informal institutions. This focus on informal institutions has brought their impact to the forefront of development and governance debates (Frederiksen, 2019; Lavers, 2019; Mitlin, 2022). In this study, a political settlement (PS) is defined as an ongoing agreement among a society’s powerful groups over a set of formal and informal institutions expected to create opportunities for acceptable levels of benefits, which prevents political and economic disorder (Kelshall, 2018, p.6; Kelshall et al., 2022, p.27). This agreement

is a mutual expectation on the distribution of benefits by institutions which can be sustained through formal rules or remade informally (Kelshall et al., 2022). Although the definitions of political settlement have undergone criticism in literature (Ingram, 2014), the rationale for the definition used in this study is that it is “both theoretically fertile and consistent with commonsense understandings of a political settlement” as an ongoing feature of the society that can take any direction, especially in the event of political rupture (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.21). Unlike a critical juncture, which refers to a period of significant change or crisis that disrupts the balance of power, a political rupture denotes the specific political outcomes that arise during such a critical juncture (Behuria et al., 2017, pp.512-513). As a result, countries, even those with similar types of political settlements, can evolve in various directions. Simply put, there is no predetermined path of progression, and movements can be forward, backward, or sideways (Hickey & Hossain, 2019).

Consequently, political settlements are dynamic and subject to change, depending on the interplay of power relations and institutions. Moreover, the above definition captures the constitutive elements of political settlement: the power relations and the nature of institutions, and how they interact (Levy, 2014), which are the central elements applied in this study. Thus, making such a definition compatible with the political settlement framework used in this study. In delineating the constitutive elements, the framework of Levy (2014) will be used in this study. Such a framework has been deployed in recent studies (see Muhhina, 2023; Hickey & Hossain, 2019), which attempts to provide objective indicators in studying political settlement and governance issues (Kelshall et al., 2022). Figure 1 captures the definition of the PS.



Figure 1. Source: Kelshall (2018, p.7).

The power configuration of political settlement and the institutions are the two key dimensions in Levy's (2014) framework of political settlement. Power configuration refers to the degree of political competitiveness that depends on the openness of the society (Levy, 2014, ch.2). This dimension can be distinguished between dominant political settlement and competitive political settlement. In dominant PS, power is concentrated in the hands of a dominant party or political leader (Levy, 2014). In this context, the disparity between the power of the rulers and the opponents is very large, which results in the vulnerability of ruling elites to be low (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). The ruling elites' invulnerability to powerful excluded factions and strong lower-level factions implies a firm grip on power and a longer time horizon. This suggests that it would require an exceptional level of commitment from opponents to pose a credible challenge to the existing order (Levy, 2014). Conversely, the competitive PS power is organized around a truce in which rival forces agree on peaceful rules for political competition (Levy, 2014, ch.2). In this context, the level of power competition is high and the disparity between the ruling party and their opponents is much narrower than in the dominant settlement. Consequently, power is fragmented and contested, and the time horizons of ruling coalitions are short (Muhhina, 2023, p.439). To maintain stability, the ruling coalitions would thus need to respect the rules of the game such as elections that provide the basis for the competitive settlement (Hickey & Hossain, 2019; Levy, 2014; Muhhina, 2023).

The interaction between power configuration on one hand, and institutions on the other are mutually constitutive of political settlements in a society. The latter exists to constrain and incentivize behavior. Just like organisms need nutrition to stay alive, states or individuals within the state struggle over resources to survive. To avoid the violence that can result from these struggles, institutions were established to shape human behavior and interaction. In the political settlement approach, institutions are referred to as 'the rules and norms that govern behavior' (Di John & Putzel, 2009, p.6). Put simply, institutions here are the 'rules of the game' that help govern and shape the behavior of actors in the social spheres (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p. 30; North 1990 as cited in Hickey & Hossain, 2019, pp.27-28). This sphere can include political parties, bureaucratic organizations, and civic associations (Hickey & Hossain, 2019, p.28). The nature of institutions is arranged in a dichotomous manner; it is either personal or impersonal rules (Levy, 2014). When institutions are personalized, their forms largely exist as the vehicles of particular interests (Hickey & Hossain, 2019, p.28). In contrast, impersonal institutions are codified in

written law, with responsibilities grounded in ethical universalism and a programmatic platform (Hickey & Hossain, 2019, p.28; Levy, 2014, ch.2).

The interplay between these two dimensions is crucial in any political settlement. Dominant PS may invest in building bureaucratic capability, enabling institutions to function impersonally and constrain both elite and ordinary citizen behavior (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). This view is supported by Khan's (2010, p.9) observation that the highest levels of state capacity for development are likely to occur where the vulnerability of ruling elites is low, which can be obtained in dominant PS. However, the dynamics may shift if the regime in such a context turns predatory (Muhhina, 2023). This shift could be further exacerbated if the development policy leans towards political liberalization, potentially leading to the dominant party losing power (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). In contrast to the situations in competitive PS where there is an existence of low elite cohesion and high inter-elite competition. Here, institutions can influence elite rule strategies. For instance, on one hand, competitive politics can reinforce patronage politics if it arises before the development of significant state capacity, presenting strong incentives to capture public organizations for political survival (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). However, on the other hand, if institutional capacity is developed, competitive politics can support the transition towards meritocratic public service systems (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). This interplay between power configuration and institutions results in four main types of political settlements prevalent in developing countries (Levy, 2014). Each type presents distinct incentives, opportunities, and constraints, influencing development and institutional outcomes. The following describes the characteristic features of each type.

Type 1. Dominate-discretionary. In this context, power is highly concentrated within a strong leadership or party, resulting in a clear allocation of decision-making authority among insiders who have resolved collective-action problems (Kelshall et al., 2022, p.53). This elite cohesion allows rulers to implement developmental reforms effectively, supported by a long-term perspective and minimal intra-elite conflict, which fosters basic coordination (Kelsall & vom Hau, 2020, p.16). However, the formal institutions in such a system are weak, and decision-making often relies on informal arrangements (Muhhina, 2023, p.438). Consequently, the dependence on particular leaders can lead to personalized capture and backsliding into instability (Hickey & Hossain, 2019, p.29).

Type 2. Competitive-personalized. Here, politics are competitive, but the rules of the game remain informal or personalized (Levy, 2014). Power is significantly dispersed across political factions within the ruling coalition, leading to continuous contestation over power and resource allocation (Whitney et al., 2015, p.106). In this context, high competition fosters survival politics, where personal deals are the currency, breeding patronage, clientelism, and corruption (Kelsall & vom Hau, 2020). Simply put, competing elites fight for their turn to rule and use state authority to capture rents for the patron-client networks that sustain their power (Muhhina, 2023, p.449). This dispersion of power and dominance of personalized rules results in particularistic social provision, prevents coherence, and limits state capacity building (Muhhina, 2023), making it difficult for ruling elites to formulate and implement successful structural transformation (Kelsall & vom Hau, 2020; Whitney et al., 2015).

Type 3. Rule-by-law dominant. In this context, institutions are becoming increasingly formal while political control remains concentrated in the hands of a dominant leadership (Levy, 2014, p. 6). In this context, there are relatively high levels of state capacity allowing state leaders to undertake state-building projects (Hickey & Hossain, 2019; Kelsall & vom Hau, 2020). Put simply, given that a certain degree of rule-boundedness has already been achieved around the exchange of political power and distribution of resources (Muhhina, 2023), this allows for a degree of accountability while maintaining political continuity (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). State leaders can leverage their firm control to accelerate development and focus on institution-building initiatives that require sustained effort.

Type 4. In the rule-by-law competitive type, political institutions have become more formal. Although the rules governing the polity and the economy have become more formal, other necessary aspects of democratic sustainability have not yet been achieved (Levy, 2014). In this context, established peaceful rules dictate how power should change hands among elites, primarily through elections (Hickey & Hossain, 2019; Levy, 2014). The elite bargain in rule-of-law competitive settlements is characterized by pluralistic politics and a higher degree of rule formalization. This setting allows for structured political transitions while still facing challenges in achieving full democratic sustainability or open access order.

2.1.1. The Role of Political Settlements in Shaping Governance Promotion Instruments

The different types of political settlements highlight the diverse dynamics that can influence governance promotion outcomes. Governance promotion instruments, therefore, are neither neutral nor universally applicable; they are shaped by the power structures, interests, and contextual factors unique to each environment. Since these instruments are designed to bring change to a targeted country, they inevitably interact with the specific realities of that environment. Simply put, governance promotion instruments are about interdependence, shaped and governed by the institutions within target countries (Levy, 2014, ch.8). In essence, the choice of these instruments should be grounded in an understanding of the political economies in which they will operate (Landry & Varone, 2005, p.112). This is because the promotion of governance tools creates opportunities, redistributes power, and privileges certain actors and interests over others (Khan et al., 2019). Furthermore, “the same instrument may unleash a string of distinct political and (re)distributive ripple effects depending on the contextual variables of specific implementation arenas” (Muhhina, 2023, p.434). Scholars have thus identified ways to align policy designs with different political settlements (Levy, 2014; Muhhina, 2023; Roy, 2017).

These policy designs encompass several key elements, including the precision of targeting in the initiatives, the actors involved in their implementation, and the coerciveness of governance promotion instruments. The precision of targeting refers to whether an initiative employs comprehensive or incremental reform approaches (Linder & Peters, 1989 as cited in Muhhina, 2023, p.446). The comprehensive approach is a system-wide public reform design that involves strengthening the central or core government structure and then cascading the reform efforts downward throughout the various operational units within the public administration hierarchy (Levy, 2014, ch.8). In contrast, an incremental approach focuses on targeting improvement of specific functions or agencies inside the public sector, particularly those that demonstrate an appetite for reform. This approach ensures that reforms become more targeted and trackable, facilitating the achievement of concrete development results.

Accordingly, the choice between these approaches is crucial, as the political settlement in which they are applied can significantly influence the outcomes. In the rule-by-law competitive type, a comprehensive strategy is considered viable because of impersonal institutions and the strong

commitment to reform objectives (Muhhina, 2023). This is also the case in dominant terrain where there is a relative degree of impersonal rule, and the leader is committed to the agenda. However, such a design is less likely to succeed in a competitive-personalized environment characterized by fragmentation, weak institutions, and a short time horizon, which undermines the ability of elites to sustain long-term orientation and commitment. Echoing a similar view, Roy (2017, p.37) suggests that the best way to ensure the success of initiatives in such contexts is to identify opportunities for strategic and incremental changes. Similarly, Muhhina (2023, p.446) suggests that narrowly targeted initiatives focused on improving specific public sectors are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. This approach aligns with the view that reform in adverse contexts should be low-key, concentrating on specific sectors with productive potential (Roy, 2017, p.37).

H1: In a competitive-personalized political settlement, anti-corruption initiatives are more likely to succeed if they are targeted incrementally rather than comprehensively.

Alongside the precision of targeting, the actors involved in the initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the policy outcomes. Traditional public administration often relies on a principal-agent delivery structure, where a clear hierarchical relationship exists between decision-makers (principals) and implementers (agents). Initiatives operating in this field typically rely heavily on governmental actors, who play a central role in the implementation. Such initiatives designed along the governmental support channel tend to succeed in the dominant PS if public goods constitute a survival strategy of the dominant ruler. However, reforms, such as those in contexts characterized by a competitive-personalized environment or weakly established rule of law, rarely succeed within governmental actors' delivery models like the principal-agent structure (Levy, 2014, ch.8). This structure necessitates robust formal institutions to prevent opportunistic behavior by policy implementers. Consequently, in competitive-personalized PS where formal institutions are weak and decision-making is shaped by elite bargains, initiatives depending on the principal-agent model may suffer the risk of administrative manipulation (Muhhina, 2023). In this context, government-centric interventions are feasible when it is concentrated in specific sectors with productive potential (Roy, 2017; Levy, 2014)

Instead of relying on a principal-agent modality or government-support strategies, involving multi-stakeholder participation (MSP), where various multiple principals have a vested interest in the

efficiency and effectiveness of developmental outcomes, can offer significant advantages. MSP, “is a way in which groups of people can make decisions and take action for the collective good, be it at local, national or international” (Brouwer et al., 2019, p.12). This approach fosters deliberation, consensus-building, transparency, improved communication, accountability, and compliance. Supporting this perspective, research has shown that policy instruments fostering participatory policymaking, interactive governance, and deliberative forums can lead to more robust policy outcomes (Michel, 2011, as cited in Capano & Woo, 2018, p. 432). Moreover, MSP is particularly effective in competitive-personalized PS where discretionary decision-making is prevalent. In such a context, MSP creates conditions for policy convergence among stakeholders, offering strong incentives that support the success of collective efforts (Jansen & Kalas, 2020, p.10; Levy, 2014, ch.8). Thus, by organizing groups to engage in effective collective action, MSP can support the enforcement of anti-corruption strategies (Roy, 2017, p.38).

H2: In a competitive-personalized political settlement, anti-corruption initiatives are more likely to succeed if they are implemented through multistakeholder arrangements rather than government structures.

The coerciveness of governance promotion initiatives poses a significant challenge to their implementation across various contexts. Salamon (2002, p. 25) defines coercion as the degree to which a tool restricts the actions of individuals or groups, rather than merely influencing or discouraging behavior. In this context, the design of initiative often employs behavioral mechanisms that alter people's actions based on the knowledge of penalties or promises of rewards (Martin et al., n.d.). These initiatives utilize a range of methods to influence public action, spanning from less coercive to high coercive. Less coercive tools promote voluntary compliance or participation through incentives, such as financial mechanisms like tax credits and subsidies (positive stimuli) or taxes (negative stimuli) (Muhhina, 2023, p. 444). These tools are less coercive as they are easier to administer, and require minimal oversight and enforcement (Martin et al., n.d.). In contrast, more coercive tools, such as social or economic regulations, mandate compliance through authority-based mechanisms. These tools impose strict restrictions on behavior and require significant resources to enforce the coercion necessary for compliance which is more effective in a small number of policy targets.

The choice between different initiative designs often hinges on feasibility, shaped by political considerations and assumptions about the targeted population (Martin et al., n.d.). The effectiveness of coercive tools depends on institutional capacity and the strength of government within a specific political settlement to build consensus and facilitate efficient decision-making (Capano & Woo, 2018, p. 432). In dominant regimes with a developmental orientation, rulers with long-term power and a focus on public goods provision can effectively use government regulatory mechanisms (Muhhina, 2023). Conversely, in competitive-personalized PS, government regulatory mechanisms are less feasible due to political fragmentation, shorter time horizons, and pervasive rent-seeking behavior. These factors often lead to non-enforcement of rules or selective enforcement when such coercive measures are applied. The argument underscores how governance initiatives must align with the political and institutional realities of their context to achieve intended outcomes.

H3: In a competitive-personalized political settlement, Anti-corruption initiatives are more likely to succeed if they are designed in a low coercive manner rather than a high coercive one.

2.1.2. Interaction Between Competitive-personalized Political Settlement and Policy Design in Anti-corruption Initiatives

The political settlement framework provides valuable theoretical insights essential for analyzing the promotion of EU governance in target countries. The initiation and implementation of externally promoted governance measures or norms are highly politicized, especially as governance is the set of formal and informal rules that determine resource allocation in society (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p.27). Thus, understanding the political landscape of a target state is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of external initiatives. Moreover, societal norms of a target country significantly shape governance promotion activities (Börzel & van Hüllen, 2014). For example, in a society characterized by ethical universalism in public life, a political order based on the fair and equal treatment of citizens by the state (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p.28), the promotion of governance by external actors reinforces existing standards, as there is already a solid foundation. Conversely, in a context where governance norms are characterized by particularism, external promotion efforts might conflict with the political environment, navigating complex and

often resistant political dynamics to be effective. Such political dynamics are crucial, particularly in the context of EU anti-corruption initiatives in developing countries.

Anti-corruption reform, as a component of governance promotion, is designed to help target countries reduce corruption and enhance development outcomes. This view is based on the understanding that corruption is an institutional issue that arises from the systematic abuse of authority, where public resources intended for universal use are diverted to benefit specific private interests (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p.27). This often manifests in illegal or informal rent-seeking activities, where public officials manipulate the allocation of resources for personal gain (Khan et al., 2019, p.11). To address these institutional deficiencies, external actors promote initiatives aimed at identifying policy changes that can reconfigure institutional mechanisms, such as establishing comprehensive anti-corruption laws and an autonomous judiciary capable of enforcing these laws (Wolf and Schmidt-Pfister, 2010, as cited in Börzel & van Hüllen, 2014, p.7). Essentially, anti-corruption strategies seek to alter incentives to improve developmental outcomes. However, these changes may conflict with the interests of those whose behavior they aim to modify (Khan et al., 2019). Consequently, anti-corruption initiatives promoted by promoters like the EU are likely to remain ineffective or disconnected from actual behavioral practices if they do not align with the political environment in the target countries (Börzel & van Hüllen, 2014).

Building on this perspective, this study argues that the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives within specific political settlement contexts is significantly influenced by how these initiatives align with key policy design elements, including precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and degree of coerciveness. In developing countries like Nigeria, which face challenges in state-building, the state often fails to establish impersonal, merit-based institutions to govern the distribution of resources (Ademmer et al., 2020). In such a context, even if competition exists in politics, the primary goal of politics often becomes the exploitation of public resources for the benefit of specific groups (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006a, as cited in Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019, p.30). Here, political competitiveness is intertwined with particularism, where current elites view public office as their turn to amass public resources. As a result, economies become privilege-based, and the state is captured by particular interests, particularly as formal institutions are weak.

In such a setting, normative initiatives from external actors, like the EU, can be limited if there is a mismatch between the initiative designs and the context-specific realities. These initiatives may be overly comprehensive, aiming to reform the core system as a whole, rather than adopting an incremental approach that targets specific sectors for improvement. Along this line, the initiatives implementation may rely more on traditional governmental channels, rather than involving a broader range of stakeholders. Additionally, the policy approach might rely on regulatory mechanisms, which could contradict the prevailing weak institution. As a result, the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives promoted by external actors is less likely to be effective, as these policy approaches may clash with the political environment and the governance realities in these countries.

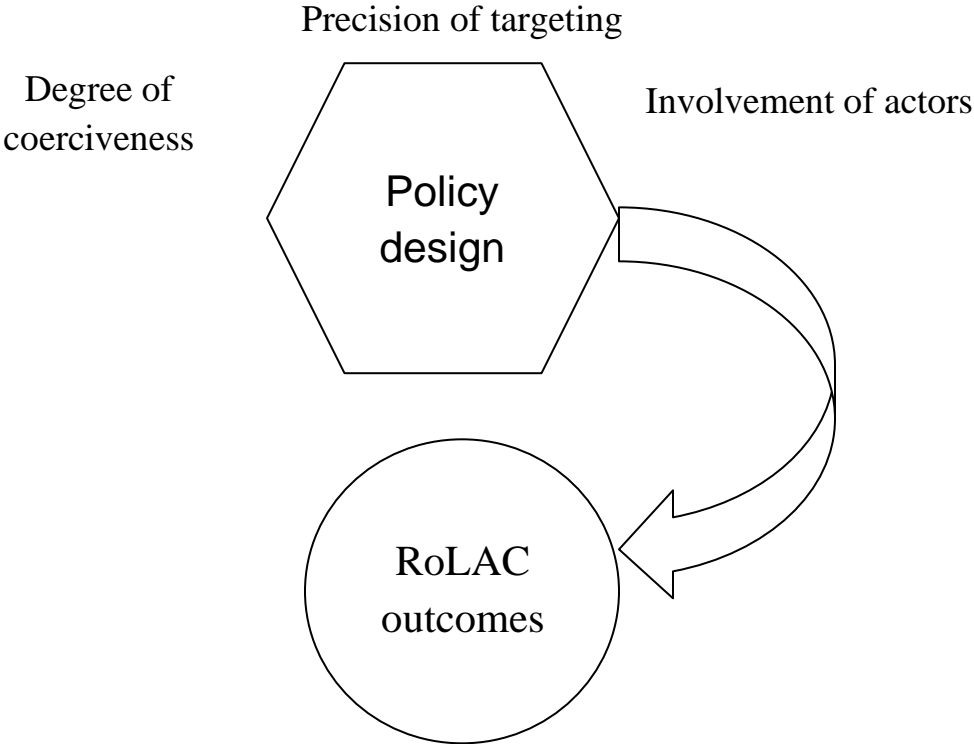


Figure 2. Source: inspired by Muhhina (2023, p.440)

In conclusion, this chapter explored the political settlement framework, defining its key components and aligning them with policy designs, thereby providing a foundational understanding that forms the basis of this study. The chapter also highlighted the hypothesis, which will guide the analysis of the study. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to the research design,

where the methodology, approach, and techniques used to gather data and analyze the research question will be outlined.

3. Methodology: A Case Study of RoLAC 2017-2023

This chapter will explain the methodological approach employed in this study. It begins with the research design and then delineates RoLAC as a single case study. Following this, it operationalizes the components of the study. Next, it outlines the method of data collection. Finally, it concludes with the analytical tool employed by the study.

This study employs a single-case design to explore a phenomenon within its unique context. This approach is important in understanding how programs operate within their specific environments (Stake, 2011, as cited in Cobian et al., 2022, p.22). By focusing deeply on a single, representative instance of a broader phenomenon of scientific interest (Bennett, 2015), the case approach in this study enables an in-depth analysis of how policy design influences anti-corruption initiatives within a specific context. This aligns with the perspective that case study design is especially valuable for examining real-life events or phenomena that are significantly shaped by their surrounding context (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, single-case studies offer the advantage of providing detailed descriptions and analyses, which deepen understanding of the "how" and "why" behind events (Ridder, 2017, p.282). Such studies can identify patterns and relationships, contributing to the development, extension, or testing of theories (Gomm et al. 2000, as cited in Ridder, 2017, p.282). Similarly, a case becomes particularly relevant when its facts are critical for supporting or challenging a theory (Gerring, 2007, p.231). In this study, existing theoretical frameworks guide the research, with propositions derived from these perspectives directing the investigation and identifying pertinent evidence (Ridder, 2017, p.282).

This case study examines the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) initiatives sponsored by the European Union in Nigeria and delivered by the British Council from between 2017 to February 2023. The RoLAC program is selected as a representative case of a good governance initiative operating within a competitive-personalized political settlement. As such, it provides a platform to apply the political settlement framework, demonstrating how this theoretical perspective can help explain the influence of policy design dynamics on the program's outcomes

in a political environment. The case illustrates the challenges of implementing anti-corruption efforts, particularly in the context of competitive politics and personalized institutions. Its significance lies in its implementation in a country like Nigeria struggling with good governance reform despite its formal democratic framework. Since 1999, Nigeria has been under civilian rule with formal democratic institutions; however, the quality of governance has remained undermined by entrenched corruption, clientelism, and weak institutional structures (Fukuyama, 2014, ch.14).

The RoLAC project, funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council from 2017 to 2023, is a comprehensive initiative designed to strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the criminal justice sector (British Council, n.d.-a). The program is part of the EU's agenda to fight against corruption a priority in engagement with partner countries, its overall objective is to enhance good governance in Nigeria by contributing to strengthening the rule of law and curbing corruption (Capacity4dev, 2024). Analyzing this program is significant because it supports Nigeria's progress in human rights, rule of law, and democracy, aligning with global commitments like Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice, and accountable governance (Ronceray & Sergejef, 2023). Additionally, the program supports the corruption concerns and anti-corruption rhetoric of Nigerian leaders (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024, pp.60-61; Obadare, 2022), which prioritized anti-corruption as a core national policy objective. Thus, RoLAC aligns closely with efforts to improve governance and curb corruption, both essential for Nigeria's development.

Focusing on the criminal justice system is likely the most appropriate level of investigation for the study's purpose, as it represents the primary domain targeted by the initiative. Moreover, concentrating on the criminal justice sector allows for the identification of the influence of the design of anti-corruption initiatives on reform outcomes, particularly due to the mismatch between the design of these initiatives and the context's dynamics. In addition, the sector has been reported as one of the primary areas plagued by corruption in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024), with issues like security agency harassment, bribery, and institutionalized corruption contributing to widespread public mistrust. Such mistrust sparked the EndSARS protest in 2020, a movement where many Nigerians protested against systemic corruption and poor governance, with some losing their lives in the process. Given the direct impact of corruption in the criminal justice sector on governance, public trust, and the rule of law, studying this sector is critical.

The RoLAC program's first phase, conducted between 2017 and 2023, falls within the scope of this study. The rationale for this delimitation is twofold. First, it focuses on the implementation period of the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption program under the British Council. Since this phase has concluded, the availability of data for analysis makes it an ideal focus for the study. Second, the program's delivery modalities influenced the selection of this timeframe. The first phase (2017–2023) was delivered by the British Council, while the second phase, beginning in 2023, is being implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (EEAS, 2023). The involvement of two different organizations in delivering these phases may result in differing implementation approaches, further supporting the decision to concentrate on the first phase for this analysis.

The study positions RoLAC as a representative case of a good governance program within the context of a personalized competitive settlement. To substantiate this, it is crucial to map Nigeria's political and institutional landscape through the lens of personalized competitive settlement. This study employs the constitutive elements of the political settlement framework—power configuration (political competitiveness) and institutions (personalized decision-making)—to demonstrate that RoLAC was implemented within a competitive-personalized settlement. The mapping begins with the first element, power configuration, which is the degree of political competitiveness that depends on the openness of the society. Scholars often assess political competition by examining the level of competitiveness or systematic advantage in electoral races (Bagchi, 2021; Dawson, 2022). This approach aligns with the view that elections serve as a framework for political competition, with results often reflecting the dominance of the ruling party (Hickey & Hossain, 2019; Levy, 2014). Moreover, some researchers, such as Levy (2014, ch.7), measured political competitiveness using Polity datasets. Accordingly, this study draws inspiration from this approach. Polity data uses indicators such as the Openness of Executive Recruitment (XROPEN), the Competitiveness of Political Participation (PARCOMP), the Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment (XRCOMP), the Executive Constraints (XCONST).

Each of these indicators is measured in different scales which sum up the political competitiveness dimension of the political settlement. Following these indicators, Nigeria was classified as politically competitive from 2017 to 2018 (See Appendix A). However, due to the absence of continuous data from Polity between 2019 and 2023, this study adopts Dawson's (2022) approach

to operationalize political competitiveness by focusing on the ex-post closeness of electoral races. This method is particularly consistent with both XOPEN, XRCOMP, and PARCOMP dimensions. In addition, it is reliable because it captures the actual outcomes and dynamics of electoral competitiveness. Dawson's method calculates "closeness" by determining the absolute percentage point difference between the top two candidates and subtracting this value from 100 (Dawson, 2022, p. 802). For example, if the difference is 19 percentage points, the competitiveness score would be 81 ($100 - 19 = 81$). A score of 51 and above indicates higher competitiveness, while a score of 50 and below suggests low competitiveness.

Applying Dawson's analytical framework to two executive or presidential elections conducted in 2019 and 2023 in Nigeria, the absolute percentage point differences between the top two candidates were 85.6% and 92.5%, respectively (for details see Appendix A). These high values reflect a high level of political competitiveness in these elections with the All Progressive Congress (APC) and People Democratic Party (PDP) becoming entrenched in a face-off with each other. This is consistent with indicators such as XROPEN (openness of executive recruitment) and XRCOMP (competitiveness of executive recruitment), which emphasize the openness of executive positions to popular elections and the presence of two or more viable political parties (Marshall et al., 2016, pp.21-22). Additionally, the absolute percentage differences in this study reinforce the notion that in a competitive political settlement, the level of power competition is high, with a relatively narrow gap between the ruling party and its opponents (see Section 2.1). Furthermore, this analysis is enriched by insights from the PARCOMP indicator, which assesses the degree of civil interaction and engagement in shaping preferences for alternative policies and leadership (Marshall et al., 2016, p.26). Drawing on Afrobarometer data, this analysis incorporates the indicators of individuals' freedom to join political organizations and their ability to vote without feeling pressured under the subcategory of freedom within the broader democracy and politics category, to unpack the observable implications of the PARCOMP indicator. The findings indicate that Nigeria's political arena exhibits notable competitiveness, showing that a majority of citizens report being free to vote and join political organizations without experiencing pressure (Afrobarometer, 2022, p.34). However, in regards to the executive constraints (XCONST) indicator, it has been given less attention especially as it overlaps with the institutional element of political settlement (Levy, 2014, ch.7).

In determining whether institutions operate under impersonal or personalized conditions, the Rule of Law (ROL) is measured using the Worldwide Governance Indicator. This indicator rates countries on a scale from -2.5 to +2.5. Following the metrics outlined by Levy (2014, ch.2), a personalized or weak institution is defined as having an ROL score of less than -0.75; an intermediate institution falls within the range of -0.75 to -0.25; and an impersonal or better institution has an ROL score greater than -0.25. Figure 2 captures the Rule of Law indicator for Nigeria from 2017 to 2023. The graph indicates that, during these years, Nigeria demonstrated a very weak ROL, characterized by discretionary decision-making, and inconsistent application of laws, rather than uniform enforcement.

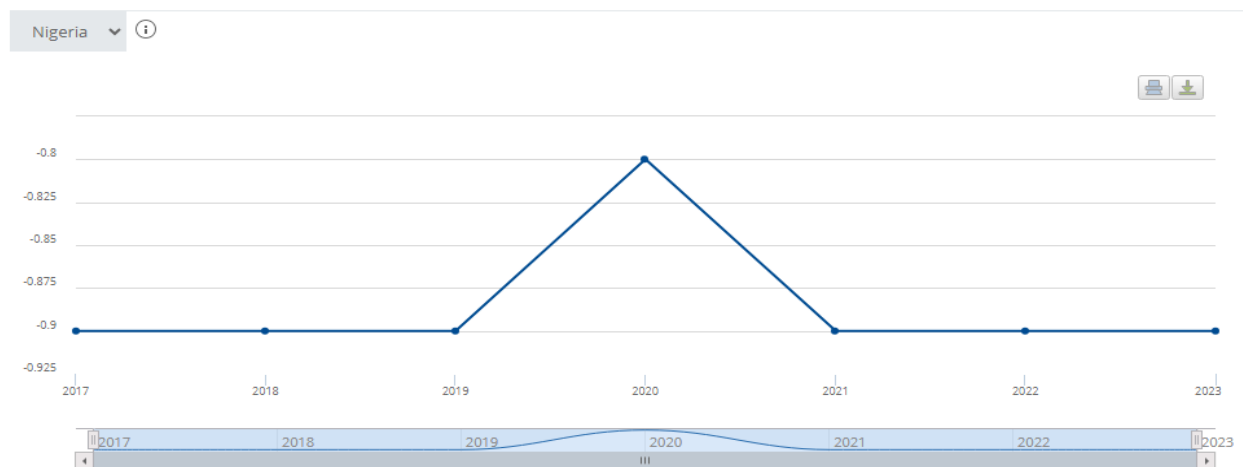


Figure 3. Source: World Bank (2024b)

In sum, this section has introduced the research design and delineated Nigeria within the framework of personalized competitive settlement. The subsequent section will focus on operationalizing the policy designs and the explained variable.

3.1. Operationalization of the Components of the Study

This study based on political settlement literature identifies policy designs as critical factors shaping the outcomes of governance initiatives, particularly when interacting with the political dynamics of the target country. In this section, these policy designs which include precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and the degree of coerciveness are operationalized as the explanatory variables alongside the explained variable which is reform performance to facilitate

empirical analysis. This study measures its explanatory variables dichotomously, categorizing them as either comprehensive or incremental for the precision of targeting, multistakeholderism or hierarchical government actors for the involvement of actors, and low coercive or high coercive for the degree of coerciveness. Drawing on the findings of political settlement literature, the identified explanatory variables represent potential factors that can influence the outcomes of reforms operating within a competitive-personalized political settlement (PS). These variables are assessed based on document analysis, particularly the reports from the RoLAC program and interviews. A specific factor is measured as present if it is identified in the document analysis and interviews, and absent if it is not mentioned in either source. While the measurement of these factors is clearly defined, it is acknowledged that, in practice, these variables may be partially present or absent in some contexts. Therefore, the analysis examines whether these factors were decisive in influencing the outcomes of the RoLAC program.

The operationalization begins with the precision of the targeting, distinguishing between a comprehensive and incremental approach. A comprehensive approach seeks system-wide reorganization of public management and the strengthening of checks and balances (Muhhina, 2023, p. 446). It typically involves a wide array of government agencies, entities, and functions, affecting multiple institutions. In contrast, an incremental approach focuses on a smaller scope, targeting fewer institutions, functions, or agencies. This approach is based on the premise that progress can be achieved through small, focused victories (Levy, ch.8). For this study, document analysis and interviews, will measure the presence or absence of each indicator in the precision of targeting. The RoLAC program's approach is classified as incremental when it targets 1–3 institutions or agencies. In contrast, a comprehensive approach involves targeting 6 or more institutions or agencies, with 6 serving as the threshold for broader, system-wide reform. The comprehensive approach is further evident when the program design extends its reach across multiple levels of government, including federal, state, and local tiers.

Alongside the precision of targeting, the study operationalizes the involvement of actors in policy initiatives, starting with multistakeholderism. It asserts that the presence of multistakeholderism in a RoLAC program, as assessed with document analysis and interviews, involves two or more classes of actors (multiple principals), including government, civil society, community-based groups, and international partners, each playing distinct roles in the initiative's implementation

(Capano & Woo, 2018, p.432; Raymond & DeNardis, 2015, p.575). In this study, particular emphasis is placed on the inclusion of civil society organizations as key actors. This focus arises from the critical role civil society plays in fostering public accountability and steering governance in a polity. In contrast, initiatives relying predominantly on hierarchical government actors often adhere to a principal-agent model. When present, reform using this system are characterized by utilizing government institutions or agencies, that maintain oversight responsibilities and implementations.

The degree of coerciveness in this study is operationalized as either low or high coercive. Operationalizing "coercive tools" involves identifying their observable characteristics within the RoLAC program with the aid of document analysis alongside interviews. The study measured low-coercive tools as those marked by minimal oversight and enforcement. These tools are characterized by issue-specific civil regulation, often relying on financial stimuli such as subsidies or grants to encourage voluntary compliance and address specific issues. In contrast, a program supporting high-coercive tools is associated with government regulatory mechanisms, such as reviewing, adopting, or enacting legislation and policies, implementation frameworks, or strategies that mandate specific behaviors or standards. These tools are authority-based, requiring adherence to regulations backed by robust enforcement mechanisms.

In addition to the policy design, reform performance will be assessed in terms of three potential outcomes: success, limited success, and reinforcement of the status quo. These outcomes will be measured with the aid of document analysis and interviews. The indicators are operationalized drawing from the expected outcomes of the program, as outlined by the program implementer. These objectives are categorized into four areas: strengthening the administration of criminal justice for timely and effective justice delivery; improving access to justice for women, children, and persons with disabilities (WCP) groups; enhancing the performance and coordination of anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) to combat corruption in critical sectors; and empowering civil society and the private sector to engage in criminal justice reforms and anti-corruption efforts (British Council, n.d.-a; DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.7). This study acknowledges that progress may be substantial in some areas while slow in others. However, the objective of the program, which links these various goals, results in the use of different metrics to measure the program outcome.

Success refers to the full realization of program objectives, which is assessed in this study based on their presence in the document analysis and interviews. It is measured by improvements such as a significant reduction in case backlogs, faster trial timelines, enhanced legal access for WCP groups, improved ACAs coordination with a significant reduction in corruption, and active participation by civil society in anti-corruption reforms.

Limited success refers to a partial achievement of program objectives, with progress in some areas but lingering challenges in others. It is observable in moderate improvements in judicial processes, while lingering inefficiencies, such as delays, persist; progress in legal accessibility for WCP groups, though limited in scope; moderate ACAs coordination with minimal impact on corruption; and marginal engagement by civil society actors in anti-corruption reforms. These indicators are measured based on their presence in the document analysis and interviews.

Reinforcement of the status quo is defined as maintaining pre-existing conditions, with the inability to achieve meaningful progress. This includes no measurable improvements in case handling or trial; no changes in the accessibility of justice for WCP groups, no progress in ACAs coordination and operations, unchecked corruption, and no participation from civil society in anti-corruption efforts which are measured based on their presence in document analysis and interview.

3.2. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

To collect data for analyzing the impacts of policy designs on anti-corruption reforms in Nigeria's political environment, this study employs two methods: document analysis and interviews. Document analysis, a widely recognized method in academic research, systematically evaluates and interprets various types of documents, such as books, scholarly articles, institutional reports, and government publications, as sources of information (Morgan, 2022). This approach is particularly valuable because documents are created by diverse stakeholders, offering multiple perspectives and reducing the bias of relying on a single source. In this study, document analysis focuses on publications related to Nigeria's cooperation with the European Union, particularly the RoLAC program, and external reports available for Nigeria's rule of law and anti-corruption measures. The primary documents include publicly available RoLAC reports in English. These documents were selected based on their relevance to the RoLAC program and their focus on the delimited period from 2017 to 2023. A total of 25 documents were analyzed (see Appendix B for

the full list). Examples of these documents include RoLAC newsletters and impact reports, which are accessible through <https://www.justice-security.ng>. Additionally, the study examined whether and how hypothesized factors were presented in the documents. This method will aid in systematically identifying key themes and patterns related to the program's design, implementation and outcomes. In addition to document analysis, this study employs the interview method.

An interview is a qualitative research method used to collect primary data through a question-and-answer conversation. This approach aims to gather detailed descriptions of the phenomena under study within the interviewee's real-world context while interpreting the meanings associated with these phenomena (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Jamshed, 2014). As qualitative research seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of opinions in their natural setting, the interview method is well-suited for this study. It enables the creation of a holistic snapshot, analyzes verbal responses, and captures the detailed views of informants (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40). Typically, interviews involve asking one or more individuals about their perspectives on a specific topic. This method was chosen for this study to obtain in-depth information that might not be accessible through other data collection techniques. Additionally, a semi-structured interview format was employed.

Although the semi-structured interview is widely used in qualitative research as an effective method for collecting data, its use in this study is justified by the need for detailed and in-depth perspectives (Leech, 2002, p. 665). It involves preset, open-ended questions, with intuitive follow-up questions from the interviewer, and can be conducted with individuals or groups in face-to-face, online, telephone, or text/email settings, typically lasting from 30 minutes to over an hour (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Jamshed, 2014). In this study, this approach allows for flexibility, enabling the interviewer to probe and expand on responses, while an interview guide (see Appendix C for the interview guide) ensures the discussion remains aligned with the study's objectives. A structured approach, by contrast, would be inadequate for this study as it might overlook important response options, whereas an unstructured approach risks diversion, potentially resulting in incomplete data collection (Leech, 2002, p. 665).

Alongside the semi-structured interview method, this study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is utilized to select respondents who are most likely to provide relevant and useful information. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups with significant

knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon of interest (Campbell et al., 2020, pp.653-654). Factors such as availability, and willingness to participate are also crucial (Palinkas et al., 2015). Accordingly, this sampling technique was used in the study, allowing the researcher to select participants who were both knowledgeable and accessible within a constrained time frame. Using this sampling method, the study targeted key individuals with expertise in the RoLAC program in Nigeria and active involvement in the anti-corruption efforts. The expertise of these experts, who are members of CSOs and Nigeria Bar Association, highly relevant to this study because they draw on their in-depth understanding of the justice and anti-corruption (AC) sectors in Nigeria, as well as their knowledge of change processes in justice and AC policies and systems. This allows them to explain the nature of RoLAC and assess the extent of its impact. These stakeholders were identified using information available on the website of the organization responsible for implementing the program.

Six participants were selected, and emails were sent to them to initiate conversations about their availability and willingness to participate. To ensure the ethical conduct of the study, the researcher sent polite messages to the interviewees, providing an honest and concise overview of the project. The researcher also assured the participants of data protection and anonymity if requested. Additionally, the interviewees' backgrounds were researched, and a list of topics for discussion was sent beforehand. This approach allowed the interviewees to identify any sensitive issues that they may wish to avoid discussing during the interview. Consent forms (see Appendix C for the informed consent form) were provided, and participants agreed on the date, time, and duration of the interview. Upon receiving positive responses from three out of the six, interview dates and times were scheduled at the convenience of the participants who preferred online interviews using Zoom rather than in-person because of their tight schedules. Each interview began with a brief introduction explaining the study's purpose and obtaining informed consent, including details on how the interview data would be used. In the analysis part of this study, these participants were numbered based on the order of the interviews (Interview 1–3).

While the interview was chosen as a feasible method to capture the necessary data for analysis, it comes with limitations. One key limitation is the sensitivity of the discussions, which may lead to reduced responses from participants. To address this, a list of discussion topics (as mentioned earlier) was shared with participants in advance. In addition, the interviews began with non-

threatening questions about participants' involvement in the RoLAC efforts and a brief description of Nigeria's institutional environment. These questions served as icebreakers, establishing rapport and easing anxieties while laying the groundwork for more sensitive inquiries and enabling a smooth transition from general to specific questions about program designs and policy outcomes (Leech, 2002, p. 666). Specific questions were designed to elicit detailed responses about participants' experiences and perspectives on the RoLAC program in Nigeria. The interview guide (see Appendix C), comprising core questions aligned with the study's theoretical framework and research objectives (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40), was employed during the 30-to-40-minute interviews conducted with participants. In addition, confidentiality was carefully ensured, with participants assured of data protection and anonymity, especially given the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Since the interviews were conducted online, certain limitations inherent to this method could arise, such as data collection challenges, technical issues, and complications with the interview environment. To address these, audio-video recording was used to ensure efficient data capture and detailed transcription of the discussions. This approach facilitated focused interactions between the researcher and participants, enabling a deeper understanding of their perspectives. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, with explicit consent obtained from each interviewee before recording. To uphold confidentiality, all recordings and transcripts will be deleted after the analysis. This study minimizes potential technical issues by informing the participants about such a scenario in advance, ensuring a smooth interview process. Additionally, a conducive environment for open and in-depth discussions was maintained through active listening and the use of prompts and follow-up questions, encouraging participants to elaborate on their responses and engage in meaningful conversations.

To conduct the data analysis, this study employs a qualitative coding procedure. This method essentially involves indexing or mapping data to create an overview of diverse information, enabling the researcher to interpret it in relation to their research question (Elliott, 2018, p.2851). A key aspect of the coding process is establishing clear, rigorous, and consistent coding procedures to meet the validity and reliability standards required in qualitative research (Williams & Moser, 2019, p.47). Guided by the study's research question and theoretical proposition, the analysis primarily relies on preset codes, with a pre-specified coding framework (see Appendix D for the

coding frame). The rationale behind using theory-based coding, specifically deductive coding derived from political settlement literature, is to ensure a focused and structured analysis that directly addresses the research question. This approach allows for efficient testing of the theoretical proposition against empirical data, ensuring consistency, relevance, and deeper insights into the phenomenon under study.

The coding frame (see Appendix D) consists of nine subcategory codes, each with two to six described indicators ensuring that both descriptive and inferential analysis are integrated. These subcategory codes include incremental targeting, comprehensive targeting, multistakeholderism, government structure, high coercive, low coercive, success, limited success, and status quo reinforcement. These nine subcategories correspond to the four key concepts (main category codes) operationalized in the operationalization section. Specifically, the first six subcategory codes represent this study's theoretical explanatory factors of precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and degree of coerciveness derived from political settlement literature, while the last three items pertain to the explained variable, reform performance, based on the program's expected outcomes.

This coding framework was utilized in document analysis and interviews, where recurring codes helped identify significant themes and shared perspectives. Subsequently, the analysis employed constant comparison, where the researcher examined frequently occurring codes, analyzing their similarities and differences across the data. This approach facilitated the identification, categorization, and interpretation of key elements in alignment with the study's theoretical propositions. It also enabled deeper analytic reflections on causal mechanisms, moving beyond descriptive analysis to offer greater inferential depth (Punch, 2014, as cited in Elliott, 2018, p. 2852; Saldaña, 2016).

However, this study has several limitations, including subjectivity, where the interpretation of data relies on the researcher's judgment, and generalizability, as the findings may not easily extend beyond the specific context studied. Addressing these limitations is crucial for enhancing the rigor, reliability, and validity of the study. To mitigate these challenges, several strategies are employed. First, triangulation is used by incorporating multiple sources, such as document analysis and interviews, to cross-verify the data (Morgan, 2022). In this study, it helps to strengthen the rigor

of the analysis and highlight any inconsistencies between document analysis, and the perception of experts on the design of RoLAC and its outcomes. Second, a coding frame is maintained to track decision-making throughout the coding process, ensuring transparency. Consistency is also ensured through the use of a well-defined coding frame (See Appendix C) that outlines how to code specific categories, guided by the core components of the study. Finally, the study provides detailed context and rich descriptions of the findings, allowing readers to understand the processes and mechanisms that may apply to other similar contexts. This approach aligns with analytic generalizability, where, unlike statistical generalization that draws inferences about a population, the researcher seeks to extend specific findings to contribute to or refine broader theoretical frameworks (Yin, 2009).

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the procedures employed in this research to test the theoretical proposition. It began by positioning and justifying the study as a single case study. In this context, the research identified the RoLAC program (2017–2023), sponsored by the EU, as an example of governance promotion within a competitive-personalized settlement. Nigeria was mapped as a competitive-personalized settlement using the PS framework to substantiate this claim. Subsequently, the study operationalized the explanatory and explained variables. It also detailed the methods of data collection and analysis employed to conduct the empirical investigation. The next chapter will analyze the theoretical propositions of this study

4. Empirical Analysis: The Impact of Reform Designs on Outcomes of the RoLAC Program in a Competitive-personalized Settlement.

This section presents the findings from the document analysis and interviews, which are used to analyze the theoretical propositions. It examines the target of the program's elements, the stakeholders involved or excluded, and the degree of coerciveness of the RoLAC program. Additionally, it evaluates the outcomes of the reforms.

4.1. Precision of Targeting

In Nigeria, the criminal justice system has long grappled with inefficiencies, marked by overburdened courts, overcrowded custodial facilities, and a pervasive lack of public confidence in its ability to deliver fair and timely outcomes. These challenges were compounded by the fragmented nature of justice sector agencies, which often operated in isolation with minimal coordination. Collaboration among agencies typically occurs only as a last resort, resulting in inconsistent and ineffective responses to systemic issues. Recognizing these institutional weaknesses, the RoLAC program sought to address these problems and foster meaningful reform across the criminal justice system.

To address these challenges, the RoLAC program adopted a comprehensive approach to criminal justice reform, targeting systemic changes at both federal and state levels. This approach aligns with the EU's strategy for supporting the RoLAC in Nigeria, which acknowledges the interconnected nature of corruption-related issues and the necessity for preventive actors to collaborate (European Commission, 2022, p.133). The strategy emphasized a sector-wide approach, requiring the EU and its delivery partners to engage with all key actors at both levels of government (European Commission, 2022, p.136). Experts interviewed in this study agreed that the program represented a system-wide reform aimed at enhancing the institutional capacity of numerous government institutions and agencies (Interview 1 & 2, 2024). Moreover, this was evident in the program's initiatives, which targeted various institutions and prioritized the revision, passage, and implementation of critical legislation, including the Administration of Criminal Justice (ACJ) laws, Penal Code Law, Nigerian Correctional Service Act, Nigeria Police Act, and Magistrate Courts Law. Justice sector reforms were also implemented in states such as Anambra, Lagos, and Kano (British Council, n.d.-b, pp. 2-4).

These reforms addressed vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system, focusing on various areas like arrest procedures, detention conditions, torture prevention, and prolonged trials, which often resulted in extended custody periods for awaiting trial persons (ATPs). The interventions aimed to systematically enhance administrative capacity, uphold due process, and promote human rights while improving case and trial management. They also introduced restorative justice and non-custodial measures to ensure collaboration among different institutions and agencies in the

criminal justice sector. As one expert noted, “the program aimed to enhance inter-agency collaboration in order to create a more coordinated and transparent justice system” (Interview 2, 2024). For example, liaison offices were established to facilitate the transmission of case files and legal advice between Departments of Public Prosecution (DPP) and State Police Commands, reducing delays (British Council, n.d.-c, p. 3). By engaging a wide range of stakeholders—including judges, magistrates, prosecutors, police investigators, and correctional officers—the program indicates a holistic approach to reform.

Alongside strengthening the administrative capacity of the criminal justice system, the RoLAC program identified a significant gap between citizens' justice needs and the services available to address them. This gap disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities (WCP), where barriers to justice further deepen poverty and exclusion. In this regard, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), a pervasive violation of human rights with severe physical, psychological, and social consequences for victims and society, became a top priority for the program. This is a result of the proliferation of abuse within the Nigerian context, where, according to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2018, 31% of girls and women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lives (British Council, n.d.-d, p.2).

To address these challenges, the program prioritized reviewing, adopting, and implementing laws such as the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act and the Child Rights Act, which criminalize violent conduct against WCP groups in various states across Nigeria (British Council, n.d.-c, p.2; British Council, n.d.-d, p.2). The RoLAC program adopted a nationally focused strategy to support the state-level domestication of the VAPP Act. Enacted in 2015 during the administration of Goodluck Jonathan, the VAPP Act aimed to enhance protection and provide redress for victims of SGBV (British Council, n.d.-d, p.2). Its objectives included eliminating violence in both private and public life, prohibiting all forms of violence against persons, ensuring maximum protection and effective remedies for victims, and enforcing the punishment of offenders. To facilitate state-level adoption, the RoLAC program tracked the progress of VAPP law adoption and gazetting across Nigeria’s 36 states, sharing progress maps to highlight the status of the VAPP Bill in each state. Thus, indicating the multi-level approach employed by the program.

To promote inclusivity, RoLAC developed toolkits tailored for criminal justice agencies and related bodies, including law enforcement, sexual assault referral centers, the judiciary, and government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). Moreover, the program established disability desks in institutions such as ministries of justice, high courts, and local government councils to improve access to justice for persons with disabilities and foster a more inclusive justice system (British Council, n.d.-c, p.2). Additionally, judicial inspection of detention facilities was instituted across all states to improve access to justice, particularly for minors. One expert noted that “RoLAC supported collaboration between federal and state law enforcement agencies and created structures within states and local communities to enhance justice inclusiveness that prompt accessibility of justice for vulnerable groups” (Interview 3, 2024). This multi-level approach included initiatives like Community Child Protection Committees in seven communities across states such as Anambra and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), which strengthened the reporting and referral of child rights violations, including child sexual abuse (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3). Family Support Units were also established in police stations in states like Adamawa and Lagos to improve access to justice for children.

The RoLAC program identified corruption as Nigeria’s most significant developmental challenge, citing the absence of robust legal frameworks, limited capacity of Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs), and poor inter-agency coordination as major barriers to effective anti-corruption efforts. To address these challenges, one of the program’s main focuses was its comprehensive approach to tackling corruption, as emphasized by one expert, who stated:

“Many of the RoLAC initiatives in the criminal justice sector focus on the strengthening of the sector by providing platforms and preventive tools which will aid different agencies and institutions in the national and state governments to tackle corruption based on the visibility that these tools afford that can hinder practices that are prevalent in government positions” (Interview 2, 2024).

This response highlights the program’s system-wide approach, which sought to enhance both national and sub-national frameworks for combating corruption in Nigeria. Central to these efforts was support for the development of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS), a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering inclusive and coordinated action against corruption.

The NACS mission is to provide a holistic strategy engaging all sectors and stakeholders, ensuring sustained, collaborative efforts to address corruption. Through the NACS which “is too broad in nature” (European Commission, 2022, p.135), RoLAC supported joint investigations and prosecutorial training for ACAs, such as the EFCC, ICPC, and Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI), as well as Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3). Additionally, RoLAC advocated for the development of state-specific anti-corruption strategies and supported the establishment of new Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units (ACTUs) within state Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to ensure the effective implementation of localized anti-corruption initiatives.

In summary, based on the presented findings, the precision of targeting was found to be comprehensive. The analysis highlights several examples of the comprehensive approach employed by the RoLAC program to reform Nigeria’s criminal justice system and combat corruption. Key initiatives included the implementation of wide-ranging legislation, capacity-building efforts across federal, state, and local governments, and the establishment of inclusive frameworks such as disability desks and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). As noted in Interview 1 (2024), “over 30 government institutions such as LEAs, ACAs, MDAs, judges, prosecutors, [...] were engaged in the intervention,” reflecting the program’s extensive reach. Supporting this, DAI Global Belgium (2023, p. 8) emphasized the broad scope of the RoLAC program, which provided support to over 100 beneficiary institutions and organizations. In addition to these efforts, the program focused on systemic reforms to address critical challenges, including prolonged detention, poor inter-agency coordination, and barriers to justice for vulnerable groups. These initiatives demonstrate that the “RoLAC reform agenda (at federal and state level)” represents “a colossal undertaking” aimed at addressing the root causes of systemic issues across sectors and governance levels (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.54; European Commission, 2022, p.140).

4.2. Involvement of Actors

In bridging the justice gap among vulnerable populations, especially among the WCP groups, the RoLAC program employed a multistakeholder approach by partnering with the government, CSOs, and community-based organizations. This collaboration addressed resource and capacity

challenges faced by both state and non-state actors, particularly in tackling SGBV and providing access to justice. Key initiatives included training on gender, disability, and survivor-focused justice delivery for law enforcement, judiciary, medical personnel, social workers, and CSOs (British Council, n.d.-d, p.2). RoLAC also sought to influence the passage of VAPP by engaging state ministries through the State Justice Sector Reform Teams (JSRT), promoting the law through the Sexual Assault Referral Centers (SARCs) Network, and mobilizing CSOs and the media (British Council, n.d.-c, p.4; British Council, n.d.-d, p.2). RoLAC also championed legal assistance by bringing together providers like the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria, the Nigerian Bar Association, and CSOs to operate legal clinics in high-risk communities and the Police Duty Solicitor Scheme (PDSS) at police detention centers. Such initiatives indicate the involvement of more than two classes of actors.

To ensure sustainability, with the aid of RoLAC, universities such as Lagos, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Bayero developed training programs in paralegal practice (British Council, n.d.-c, p.4). Additionally, the RoLAC program supported CSOs like the Child Protection Network and Women's Rights and Health Project addressed child abuse and SGBV cases by referring them to police or state authorities. These organizations also provided emergency medical, counseling, and legal services to SGBV survivors, including persons with disabilities, further strengthening access to justice for vulnerable groups. These highlight the involvement of non-state actors especially CSOs. The program collaborated with multistakeholder partners, including the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Federal Ministry of Justice, entertainers, disability community, social media influencers, and CSOs, to raise public awareness about redress channels and advocate for state governments to fund and sustain justice services for women, children, and persons with disabilities (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3; British Council, n.d.-d, p.4). The program supported statewide media and social media campaigns and used drama and theatre to challenge the culture of silence surrounding SGBV (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3).

While the RoLAC program emphasized multistakeholderism, its implementation frequently depended on government structures in many areas. The interview with the experts suggests that the extent of actor engagement varied depending on the specific issue at hand. One of the experts noted that “the program engaged both state and non-state actors very well in efforts to address justice gaps for vulnerable populations” (Interview 2, 2024). Nevertheless, as pointed out by

another expert “government agencies retained significant influence in enhancing the administrative capacity of the criminal justice system and tackling corruption” (Interview 3, 2024).

In line with the latter observation, to strengthen administrative capacity, RoLAC prioritized establishing a robust legal framework for implementing the ACJ laws and related provisions across various states (European Commission, 2022, p.139). These frameworks were designed to be enforced through government mechanisms to address vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. Key provisions included those in the ACJ Law and the Nigerian Police Act, which safeguarded rights during detention, upheld the right to remain silent, and guaranteed access to legal representation during interrogation (British Council, n.d.-b, pp.2-3). Furthermore, the Nigerian Correctional Services Act (NCSA) introduced measures such as sentence rationalization and noncustodial alternatives, underscoring the program’s reliance on government structures for implementation. In addition, RoLAC also provided technical assistance to review and amend related criminal legislation in select states, including the Magistrate Court Law and Criminal Code Laws in Adamawa, Anambra, Edo, and Lagos.

In combating corruption, civil society, and the media played a role primarily in advocacy and awareness campaigns. However, the major initiatives were predominantly led by government agencies. This was evident in the development of the NACS, which served as a comprehensive framework for coordinated, inclusive action against corruption and was executed through government channels (British Council, n.d.-e, p.2). As part of this, the establishment of the NACS Secretariat and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) committee was facilitated. Key actors involved in this committee were primarily government agencies, including the ICPC, EFCC, and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), while CSOs and the media were relegated to advocacy roles and public awareness campaigns (Interview 2, 2024). RoLAC supported ACAs in designing and deploying corruption prevention strategies which significantly relied on government agencies like ICPC, and National Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO) (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3). The program also bolstered the capacity of ACAs and LEAs to combat money laundering in the extractive sector by collaborating with the Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI). Thus, highlighting the emphasizes of the program in building robust state institutional capacity for anti-corruption crusade.

Although RoLAC-designed interventions were equally targeted at improving the capacity of groups like CSOs to engage with the government in the fight against corruption, their participation in anti-corruption reforms was limited. This was partly due to the exclusion of demand-side actors during the early design and implementation phases of key policies, which restricted their ability to engage effectively (British Council, n.d.-e, p.7). Furthermore, “the targeted agencies assumed full ownership of reform initiatives” (Interview 1, 2024), which marginalized the role of civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.27). This centralization of control meant that the government agencies themselves became the primary drivers of the reform processes, limiting transparency and reducing opportunities for meaningful collaboration with external stakeholders. For example, the Federal Ministry of Justice (FMOJ) led NACS and Freedom of Information reforms, the Bureau for Public Procurement spearheaded NOCOPO, and the ICPC managed the Ethics and Compliance Scorecard and the ACTU Effectiveness Index (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3).

In conclusion, drawing from the analysis presented in this section, the involvement of actors in the program varied depending on the issue. The RoLAC program employed a multistakeholder approach, engaging government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community-based organizations to address gaps in justice service delivery and raise public awareness for women, children, and persons (WCP) groups. Key strategies included training and mentoring, facilitating dialogue between CSOs and government, and funding CSO-led initiatives (British Council, n.d.-f, pp. 2–3). However, the implementation of RoLAC initiatives aimed at strengthening administrative capacity in the criminal justice system and addressing corruption primarily relied on government structures. This included the domestication of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) and the procurement bill (European Commission, 2022, p. 139). Government agencies maintained significant control and ownership over these key initiatives, limiting the involvement of demand-side actors, particularly during the early stages of policy design and implementation. Consequently, the influence of non-state actors in critical areas such as anti-corruption reforms and criminal justice system improvements was curtailed (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p. 27).

4.3. Degree of Coerciveness

The program prioritized establishing a robust legal framework to advance criminal justice reform in Nigeria, focusing on bridging the justice gap for disadvantaged and marginalized groups. To address the justice gap, RoLAC aimed to enhance the availability and quality of justice services by facilitating legislation enacting and implementing stronger protections and redress mechanisms for vulnerable populations. Such regulatory mechanism includes supporting the development and implementation of rules of court and practice directives to address gender issues and improve access to justice for women across federal and state law enforcement agencies, ministries of justice, and the judiciary (British Council, n.d.-d, p.3). In addition, the program emphasized the review, adoption, and implementation of critical laws such as the VAPP Act and the Child Rights Act, with operational protocols and practice directions introduced to guide institutions in delivering gender-sensitive, child-friendly, and inclusive justice. For instance, Practice Directions on Protection Orders under the VAPP Act were developed for the judiciary in states like Edo and Adamawa (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3). These orders outlined the applicability and process for issuing and enforcing orders to protect individuals at risk of violence or victims of ongoing abuse which demanded robust oversight and enforcement. Furthermore, guidelines for handling sexual and gender-based violence trials were developed, and 11 courts across four states were designated as SGBV courts (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3). Guidelines for adjudicating cases involving children in conflict with the law were also developed and deployed in Anambra and Edo states. These guidelines reflect the program's emphasis on supporting highly coercive approaches.

RoLAC also championed legislation criminalizing discrimination against persons with disabilities and supported the implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) at the federal level, and enactment or amendment of ACJ laws in states such as Kano, Adamawa, Anambra, and Lagos (British Council, n.d.-c, p.2; DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.20). These laws introduced provisions demanding oversight and enforcement by judicial and law enforcement agencies (Interview 1, 2024). This is particularly significant, as the interventions were designed to strengthen due process, uphold human rights, improve case management, and implement restorative justice and non-custodial measures, which were envisioned to close the justice gap for vulnerable populations and decongest criminal cases (British Council, n.d.-b, p.3). For example,

ROLAC supported the implementation of the plea bargain procedure, through the development of the plea bargain manual (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.28; European Commission, 2022, p.139).

Additionally, guidelines, tools, and reporting templates, including SOPs, were developed for the Nigeria police force to standardize procedures and improve operational efficiency. Guidelines on deploying judicial oversight visits to places of detention were also created and implemented to ensure accountability and human rights protections within the justice system. These initiatives highlight the program's emphasis on supporting highly coercive measures, which require robust oversight and effective enforcement mechanisms. This is summarized in the observation that, under the RoLAC program, the EU supported:

“the adoption and implementation of the [...] legislation at federal and state level; as well as the adoption of new practices by justice service providers at state and federal level – with examples including enhanced case management practices and systems, new guidelines on sentencing, custody management, access to court oversight visits, plea bargains, and the introduction of non-custodial measures, etc.” (European Commission, 2022, p.139).

In regard to curbing corruption, RoLAC supported the development of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS), whose objectives include strengthening preventive measures against corruption and improving the recovery and management of proceeds of crime. The program developed implementation tools, including a M&E framework, an action plan, SOPs, and reporting templates, all of which were critical in tracking progress and ensuring transparency (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3). Corruption prevention measures were enhanced through the program support to the ICPC, which assisted in developing and deploying the Ethics and Compliance Score Card (ECSC) and National Ethics Policy (European Commission, 2022, p.139). These preventive measures require robust institutional oversight and enforcement, highlighting the high level of coerciveness inherent in the instrument.

Additionally, RoLAC supported the reform of legal frameworks at the federal and some state levels. For instance, a new proceeds of crime bill, the mutual legal assistance in criminal matter bill, and federal audit at the federal level (European Commission, p.139). Then the proceeds of crime law in Adamawa state, while Anambra, Adamawa, Edo, and Kano states new public

procurement laws (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3). Also, the capacity of national and state public procurement management and oversight institutions was supported through the development of the NOCOPO, which promotes open and transparent handling of public procurement actions, further supporting efforts to curb corruption and enhance accountability in public sector transactions. This indicates the high level of coerciveness embedded in the program's approach, emphasizing preventive measures to ensure compliance, transparency, and accountability in governance and public sector transactions.

While the RoLAC program designed interventions that ensured robust preventive measures and administrative laws through government regulatory frameworks, it also provided training and grants to sustain these efforts. Technical and funding support was offered for the establishment and enhancement of SGBV response mechanisms, including SARCs, state SGBV Response Teams, state VAPP Implementation Committees, national and state Sexual Offender Databases, and SGBV Courts (British Council, n.d.-c, p.2). Judges and magistrates were trained on plea bargaining manuals, while police officers received training and mentorship on SOPs (British Council, n.d.-b, p.4). Additionally, training on gender, disability, and survivor-focused justice delivery was provided for law enforcement officers (police, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps), judges, magistrates, prosecutors, social protection officers, family court assessors, medical personnel, social workers, and civil society organizations (CSOs) (British Council, n.d.-c, p.3). Grants were awarded to community-based CSOs to establish additional reporting and referral channels, strengthening the capacity of communities to recognize SGBV and coordinate with the formal justice system to respond and rescue victims (British Council, n.d.-f, p.3). In addition, the program aimed to revitalize CSOs' participation, especially through NEITI, in addressing corruption. Similarly, RoLAC supported joint investigations and provided prosecutorial training for ACAs and select LEAs to curb corrupt practices (British Council, n.d.-e, p.3).

In sum, based on the findings presented in this section, the degree of coerciveness was found to be high. The program's major emphasis is to build capacity in the criminal justice sector, focusing on addressing justice and corruption through robust regulatory practices and frameworks. This was evident in the RoLAC initiatives, which were undertaken to support legislative and institutional reforms such as the NACS, different SOPs, and guidelines for various ministries and government

agencies. Although the RoLAC program prioritized the establishment of committees, training, and the awareness-raising of officials, these efforts were specifically aimed at enhancing their regulatory effectiveness. This view is reflected in the observation that:

“the institutional set-up – namely Federal Justice Sector Reform Coordinating Committee and state justice sector reform committees (the project’s main interlocutor) which are inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordinating committees – has enabled the [...] RoLAC project to support cooperation between key actors with a role in **ACJA implementation**” (European Commission, 2022, p.140, emphasis added).

4.4. Reform Outcome

The RoLAC program has achieved remarkable progress in enhancing access to justice for vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. A key milestone has been the significant expansion of the VAPP Act's adoption across states. When the program began, only 14 states had enacted the VAPP legislation (British Council, n.d.-d, p.5). However, RoLAC's national advocacy strategy led to an additional 18 states passing the VAPP Act into law. Furthermore, the program facilitated the establishment of a national sexual offender register, which documents cases of sexual violations as defined by the VAPP Act. This initiative has resulted in the creation of registers in three states, with six more states following suit, all connected to the national register. As a result, 169 criminal convictions have been recorded across nine states and the Federal Capital Territory, demonstrating the program's tangible impact on the criminal justice system (British Council, n.d.-d, p.5).

Through partnerships with the NBA and CSOs, RoLAC facilitated access to justice for approximately 24,000 individuals within vulnerable communities. Of these, 14,000 individuals had their rights protected through legal processes, including prosecutions, civil hearings, and protection orders. The RoLAC assessment highlighted this progress, which asserted “that access to justice for women, children and persons with disabilities has improved at federal level and in

selected focal states, thanks to the project’s support” (European Commission, 2022, p.141). Further evidence of progress is reflected in the Sexual Assault Referral Centres, which, between July 2017 and November 2022, provided free emergency medical, psychosocial, and legal support to over 31,300 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (British Council, n.d.-d, p.4). The program also succeeded in “elevating sexual and gender-based violence to a national issue, promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, and contributing to a reduction in the stigma associated with SGBV through targeted awareness campaigns” (Interview 1, 2024). These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of joint efforts by government and non-state actors in achieving meaningful reform. Additionally, they illustrate how issue-specific civil regulations which is a low coercive tool positively influenced the program's impact, which ensured justice accessibility and advocacy for marginalized groups.

Despite notable advancements in improving access to justice for vulnerable populations, this progress has been marred with difficulties. Significant challenges—primarily stemming from inefficiencies within the criminal justice system—have limited the RoLAC program's success in bridging the justice gap. Challenges such as the slow pace of legal proceedings continue to obstruct the timely prosecution and conviction of cases, limiting the scope of the progress achieved. For example, data from Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) indicates that as of the end of 2022, over 3,068 arrests related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) had been made. However, only 604 of these cases were brought to court, resulting in a mere 36 convictions (British Council, n.d.-d, p.5). This was equally evident in the observation that although,

“the current level of access to justice for women, children and persons living with disabilities in RoLAC program locations has improved [...], the justice system is still slow in most of the focal states and women and persons living with disabilities still find it hard to access justice” (European Commission, 2022, p.141).

Such findings underscore that while some progress has been made in addressing the justice gap, systemic inefficiencies—such as case backlogs and prolonged trial durations—continue to hinder justice delivery, thus limiting the scope of the progress. These delays in rendering of justice undermine the effectiveness of initiatives like SARCs and impede the program’s ability to ensure swift justice for vulnerable populations.

Regarding this, although the RoLAC program introduced and supported best practices and legislative measures to address these inefficiencies, these policy changes' implementation and compliance rates remain notably slow. One expert noted that “the program sought to enhance criminal justice institutions through the implementation of new institutional practices; however, adaptability to these practices remains a key issue” (Interview 2, 2024). This observation is supported by the findings that the number of policy-practice changes implemented by justice service providers—aimed at improving access to justice and safeguarding the rights of WCP, and other vulnerable groups—has progressed at a sluggish pace (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.30). These changes include the passage of new legislation and amendments to existing laws; however, their impact remains limited due to slow adoption and weak enforcement. This highlights that support for robust regulatory practices within a weak institutional landscape can inadvertently hinder the effectiveness of reform outcomes. This is exemplified by the evidence that although RoLAC supported the Administration of Criminal Justice Act and Nigerian Correctional Service Act in 2019 (British Council, 2021d), the average time spent on remand by awaiting trial person is still high. As of 6 December 2021, official data from the Nigerian Correctional Service cited a total of 71,383 inmates – made up of 19,865 convicted persons (28%) and 51,518 awaiting trial persons (72%) (British Council, 2021d). Such figures of awaiting trial alongside the 36 convictions made in regard to sexual and gender-based violence reflect limited progress that the program had made in closing the justice gap among the vulnerable population.

Reforms aimed at strengthening administrative issues in Nigeria have been significantly hindered by the country's complex institutional landscape. These reform efforts, which relied on introducing administrative measures, guidelines, and standard operating procedures supported by robust regulations, have encountered challenges due to limited institutional capacity. As a result, the outcomes of these reforms have been adversely affected. This concern is encapsulated in the observation that in Nigeria, “the existing infrastructural gaps that limit the administration of criminal justice, although beyond the scope of the programme, if remained unaddressed, can further undermine the benefits gained” (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p. 49). Such challenges are particularly evident in a Nigeria context where numerous attempts to reform the justice sector have been made over the past decade, but these efforts have often lacked the political commitment and resources necessary for comprehensive and sustained reforms (European Commission, 2022, p.134).

Moreover, such constraint was evident in the RoLAC program where the nascent establishment and revival of committees, facilitated through programmatic aid to target and implement reforms, faced significant constraints (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.49). These constraints arose due to the sector-wide approach, the substantial resources required, little appetite for reform on the part of government agencies, and the time needed to build the capacity for reform implementation (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.49; Interview 2, 2030). This situation highlights how systemic-wide, high-coercive policy designs implemented through government structures—while imposing strict requirements—demand extensive resources, long-term commitment, and enforcement mechanisms, which are often unavailable in such contexts as Nigeria. Consequently, these factors have limited the success of reforms, particularly in terms of effective implementation and criminal justice administrative reforms.

In terms of curbing corruption, the primary contribution of the RoLAC program was the establishment and promotion of preventive anti-corruption (AC) measures. While many of these measures predated the program, RoLAC played a pivotal role in their implementation across MDAs at both federal and state levels, particularly through the National Anti-Corruption Strategy. This included the rollout of functional Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units (ACTUs) and the ECSC among MDAs, facilitated by the program in collaboration with ICPC (British Council, 2020d). These tools have raised awareness among MDAs about the importance of adhering to ethics and integrity requirements. However, the implementation of tools such as the ECSC and the ACTU performance index has yet to produce robust data on their effectiveness, suggesting that the intended coordination has yielded moderate results.

While the RoLAC program provided ACAs with these tools to enhance coordination among MDAs, their provision alone has not ensured collaboration between ACAs and MDAs (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.30). A key reason for this shortfall is the insufficient integration of systems necessary for the full operationalization of tools like the ECSC across MDAs. This challenge is evident in the partial compliance rate of only 46% with the ECSC among MDAs, as reported by (ICPC) (British Council, n.d.-e, p.6). Moreover, evidence highlights “a lack of political will on the part of the government to compel compliance by some key MDAs” (European Commission, 2022, p.141). These insufficient systems to integrate this policy among MDAs, and low levels of commitment and compliance highlight the impact of system-wide, regulatory, and

government-reliant policy designs on program outcomes. Additionally, there is an unwillingness in the side of public institutions in Nigeria to share data that measures the impact of reforms and interventions (British Council, n.d.-e, p.6).

In the absence of such willingness, and strong institutional frameworks, tools like the ECSC which are highly coercive and rely on government structure, have moderate progress in their adoption, implementation, and effectiveness as shown in the partial compliance rate. This finding is summarized in the observation that “achieving progress on the preventive aspect of anti-corruption efforts will necessitate a change in mindset within public administration” (Interview 2, 2024). This further highlights the impacts of enforcement regulations and system-wide intensive policy designs in shaping the outcomes of justice initiatives. While enforcement regulations are crucial for ensuring compliance and accountability, their sustainability and effective implementation are often undermined by systemic inefficiencies within a weak institutional framework, which limits the program’s impact. Alongside these limited compliance and coordination, critical anti-corruption measures—such as the Proceeds of Crime Bill, the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill, and the Federal Audit Bill—failed to secure presidential assent despite strong advocacy efforts by civil society organizations (CSOs). These legislative setbacks are linked to political economy factors, including inter-agency rivalries and vested interests among members of parliament (European Commission, 2022, p.139). These challenges further suggest that a regulatory framework that relies on government structure is less feasible in a fragmented political environment where competing interests and a lack of cohesive institutions undermine reform efforts (British Council, n.d.-g, p.6).

In terms of progress, the program contributed to the efforts of anti-corruption agencies in prosecuting corrupt practices. The proportion of corruption convictions compared to prosecutions exceeded targets for some agencies: the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) achieved a 98% conviction rate (milestone: 35%), and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) achieved 36% (milestone: 32%) (British Council, n.d.-e, p.4; European Commission, 2022, p.141). While these figures indicate an increase in prosecutions, the majority of these cases fall outside the criminal justice sector. This is evident as the adoption and implementation of the NACS have not been effective in curbing corruption in the sector (British Council, n.d.-g, p.2).

This raises concerns, particularly as bribery remains widespread within the criminal justice system (European Commission, 2022; National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). A key issue has been the difficulty in engaging actors within the criminal justice system to address corruption effectively. The RoLAC project aimed to support initiatives such as the implementation of the National Judicial Council (NJC) judicial policy, the Nigerian Bar Association Code of Conduct, and other actions aligned with the NACS and Justice Sector Reform Teams. These initiatives were designed to tackle corruption within the criminal justice sector. However, the project encountered significant challenges in engaging key institutions like the NJC and NBA critical mandates in this area which has limited its progress, and implementation (European Commission, 2022, p.142). Simply put, the population perceives the criminal justice “as corrupt and the EU’s attempts to promote integrity within the institutions that benefit from its support have been inconclusive” (European Commission, 2022, p.147). This suggests that the RoLAC program's reliance on a regulatory government structure characterized by discretionary decision-making has hindered both the coordination and progress of these instruments in this sector.

Discretionary decision-making within these institutions has raised significant concerns about the program's ability to achieve its objectives. Political interference has been identified as a major barrier to the program's effectiveness, undermining its efforts to foster meaningful reform and ensure accountability. Put differently, “unless the process is anchored by a strong and powerful state [...] agency, it is likely to founder” (British Council, n.d.-g, p.6). For instance, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), an autonomous unit within the Central Bank of Nigeria supported by the RoLAC program to enhance its electronic platform for secure intelligence sharing with ACAs and LEAs, reported that “it is facing ‘illegal’ pressure from politicians and senior government officials” (European Commission, 2022, p.142). Additionally, in anti-corruption initiatives by RoLAC to support coordination in the criminal justice system, there is an existence of resistance and turf fighting among both law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies, which affects coordination among the ACAs (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.31). Further evidence of this is seen that the RoLAC’s goals of advocating for institutional reforms in this area have not been achieved, primarily due to the different vested interest from partner agencies (Interview 3, 2024). This indicates that, within a fragmented anti-corruption institutional landscape, broad systemic reforms “have not guaranteed the continuous use of those tools to bring about collaboration among

ACA” (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.31). This further highlights the limited success of efforts, such as those pursued by the RoLAC program, to align and coordinate ACAs.

Furthermore, efforts to establish a NACS-wide inter-agency coordination and protocol have not materialized due to the fragmented nature of Nigeria's anti-corruption institutional framework, which continues to face significant capacity and resource constraints (European Commission, 2022, p.140). Such observation highlights how reform tools like NACS which is characterized by systemic-wide and regulatory elements can undermine outcomes. From a comprehensive design perspective, this approach (NACS) overstretches resources significantly (Interview 3, 2024). High-level political commitment is critical in this context, as powerful vested interests that benefit from the status quo often resist, delay, or undermine anti-corruption reforms, thereby limiting their impact (British Council, n.d.-g, p.6). Evidence of such political commitment includes staffing and funding support and publicly championing the independence of anti-corruption units (British Council, n.d.-g, p.6), which “the Nigerian anti-corruption institutional landscape [...] still lack” (European Commission, 2022, p.140). As such, weak institutions, a lack of cohesion, and an absence of long-term commitment have hindered the coordination and progress of anti-corruption efforts in the criminal justice sector. Thus, highlights how designs focused on regulatory, government structure, and systemic reform are often impeded in such contexts, limiting the success of objectives such as NACS supported by RoLAC to improve coordination and the reduction of corruption in Nigeria.

In terms of engaging non-state actors, the program saw an increasing involvement of civil society and community-based organizations (CSOs) in raising awareness and improving access to justice for women, children, and persons with disabilities (WCP). This was particularly evident in states where awareness programs led by these demand-side actors expanded access to justice services for vulnerable groups (British Council, n.d.-f, p.4). Additionally, grants provided by the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) program enabled CSOs to collaborate more effectively with government agencies, fostering mutual understanding of challenges and opportunities for advancing criminal justice reforms and combating corruption in Nigeria (British Council, n.d.-f, p.4). However, a critical limitation was the lack of active involvement of demand-side actors in the initial formulation of these initiatives. Their engagement became significant only after the midterm evaluation, and this delayed participation diminished the program’s potential impact,

particularly in addressing the challenges associated with implementing the Administration of Criminal Justice (ACJ) framework (British Council, n.d.-e, p.7; DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.27). This highlighted that the exclusion of the demand-side actors during the early design and implementation phases of key policies limited their capacity to contribute effectively (British Council, n.d.-e, p.7). Thus, indicating their marginalized involvement.

Outside of their advocacy for justice accessibility for WCP groups, non-state actors were marginalized in their broader contributions to the program. While CSOs had a voice in advocating for access to justice, their demands for specific actions from criminal justice providers or anti-corruption agencies were often ignored. The quality of CSO engagement with the authorities will ineluctably vary with the choice of topic (Interview 2, 2024). As noted, “CSO engagement with justice institutions and ACAs on law/policy decision-making and review, though initiated through advocacy support and joint initiatives, is still not entrenched in the practices of national institutions” (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.51). Furthermore, it was highlighted that assistance for investigative journalism on criminal justice matters and the support for reporting/complaint mechanisms has been lacking due to challenges in engaging the judiciary on issues of transparency and integrity (DAI Global Belgium, 2023, p.51; Interview 2, 2024). This highlights the challenges faced by non-states like CSOs in partnering state institutions in criminal justice, especially in anti-corruption reform in a weak institution. Thus, marginalized CSOs' participation and further impacted the program's outcome. This observation is summarized in that the “enhanced opportunities for CSO-MDA engagement have not led to as many policy/practice changes as expected. This reflects both ambitious project targets under the [...] RoLAC project and the reality on the ground.” (European Commission, 2022, p.144)

In summary, this analysis examined the impact of RoLAC's reform designs within Nigeria's competitive, personalized political settlement. While the program made progress in expanding access to justice, its success was limited by trial delays and case backlogs. Despite introducing best practices and legislative measures, implementation and compliance were slow. Efforts to strengthen administrative capacity and combat corruption faced significant constraints, particularly due to a system-wide design approach that relied on coercive regulatory tools and government structures. These efforts were hindered by weak institutions, lack of political commitment, and inter-agency conflicts. The program's ambitious goals were undermined by

limited institutional capacity and resource constraints. This is further encapsulated in the observation that the “EU ambitions to push for some structural changes [**through the RoLAC program**] in this area [**criminal justice reform in Nigeria**] have not been met – in large part owing to the limited appetite from partner agencies” (European Commission, 2022, p.142, emphasis added).

5. Discussion

This section presents the analysis results, offering a systematic overview of the findings. It examines the impact of policy designs on the RoLAC program, framed by the theoretical approach outlined in the second chapter. The three key factors influencing the program's outcomes include precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and the degree of coerciveness.

As expected, the findings highlighted the comprehensive targeting and extensive reach of the RoLAC program in reforming Nigeria’s criminal justice system and combating corruption. Key initiatives included capacity-building efforts at the federal and state levels and creating inclusive frameworks such as the NACS within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. The program involved many government institutions, including Anti-corruption Agencies, Law Enforcement Agencies, Judges, etc. These efforts underscore the ambitious scope of the RoLAC reform agenda, which aims to tackle the root causes of systemic challenges across sectors and governance levels. Moreover, RoLAC prioritized the implementation of laws such as the ACJL and ACJA to establish a robust legal framework for advancing criminal justice reform. Thus, this broad-based policy underscores the comprehensive nature of the targeting.

In terms of involvement of actors, the engagement varied, the RoLAC program employed a multistakeholder approach, engaging government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community-based organizations to address gaps in justice service delivery and raise public awareness for WCP groups (British Council, n.d.-f, pp. 2–3). However, the implementation of RoLAC initiatives aimed at strengthening administrative capacity in the criminal justice system to aid accessibility, and addressing corruption primarily relied on government structures. This was reflected in the development and implementation of various legislative acts, which provided a

comprehensive framework for enhancing administrative capacity and fostering coordination through government channels.

The degree of coerciveness of the instrument deployed by RoLAC was high. This included the support for the domestication of criminal law like ACJL in some states, and other anticorruption bills (British Council, n.d.-b, p.3). It equally focused on many regulatory mechanisms such as directives and guidelines for vast criminal justice agencies. It also included the implementation of compliance mechanisms such as the Ethics and Compliance Score Card (ECSC) and National Ethics Policy (European Commission, 2022, p.139). These preventive measures require robust institutional oversight and enforcement, highlighting the high level of coerciveness inherent in the instrument.

While these approaches are designed to bring about robust changes in Nigeria, the adaptability of such in a competitive political settlement marked by weak institutions and fragmented elite interests has marred the implementation of these policies. Such can be found in a lack of political commitment which is evident in insufficient staffing, funding, and support for anti-corruption unit independence. Also, low compliance, lack of cooperation, and vested interests among government agencies have been found to impede progress implementation, especially in criminal justice which is marked by corruption. These have impeded the fight to reduce corruption, particularly in the justice sector. This is evident in the main obstacles to fighting corruption in this sector which “include nepotism, low salary, and political interference, and for the judiciary, a lack of effective oversight and complaint mechanism” (European Commission, 202, p.143). Additionally, turf conflicts among agencies, stemming from a failure to treat corruption as a collective fight, have further undermined the program's effectiveness (DAI Belgium, 2023, p.31). Thus, affecting the coordination of the ACAs. Moreover, the high rate of prosecution witnessed adds to the moderate progress especially as there is relatively low compliance evident in ESCS compliance level which is 46%, and the endemic of corruption in the criminal justice system

The RoLAC program introduced best practices and legislative measures to address delays and case backlogs in justice accessibility, but their implementation and compliance have been slow. While the program aimed to enhance criminal justice institutions and improve access to justice for vulnerable groups, progress has been hindered by challenges in adaptability, slow adoption of

policy changes, and weak enforcement. These issues are illustrated by although 3,068 arrests related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) have been made, however, only 604 of these cases were brought to court, resulting in a mere 36 convictions (British Council, n.d.-d, p.5). Thus, underscores how weak institutional frameworks can limit the effectiveness of reforms despite the introduction of robust regulatory practices. These weak institutions and limited capacity also influence the implementation of legislative mechanisms that are supported to strengthen administrative capacity.

Furthermore, the RoLAC program saw increased involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in raising awareness and improving access to justice for vulnerable groups. However, the delayed engagement of demand-side actors, who were not involved in the initial design of initiatives, limited their impact. While CSOs advocated for justice accessibility, their broader contributions were marginalized, with their demands often ignored by criminal justice and anti-corruption agencies. Despite efforts to engage CSOs, their participation in policy and decision-making was not fully integrated into national institutions, hindering the program's effectiveness. Consequently, CSO engagement did not lead to the expected policy changes, reflecting the challenges of aligning ambitious targets with ground realities, where government engagement with CSOs varies especially based on the issue (European Commission 2022, p.145).

While this study offers valuable insights into the impact of policy designs on the RoLAC program, it has limitations. The study relied mainly on reports from the program implementer, complemented by a limited number of interviews. Although these sources provided substantial material for analysis, the broad scope of the program suggests that additional perspectives and data could have enriched the findings. Additionally, the methodological approach may introduce subjectivity in interpretation. While the findings align with theoretical propositions in political settlement literature, future research should incorporate a broader range of methodological perspectives to enhance the generalizability of the results.

6. Conclusion

The study employs the political settlement perspective to examine what factors impacted the EU-funded RoLAC program in Nigeria. The focal point of this research was to study *how can the political settlements analysis explain the limited success of the RoLAC program in Nigeria's criminal justice system between 2017-2023?* To address the research question, this study drew on theoretical propositions from political settlement literature, which explains institutional development outcomes within specific contexts by examining political and institutional constraints and incentives (Levy, 2014). Furthermore, it emphasizes aligning policy designs with these contextual terrains to create a good-fit instrument mix that fosters positive reform outcomes (Muhhina, 2023). Guided by this framework, the study hypothesized that *“in competitive personalized settlement anti-corruption initiatives are more likely to succeed if they are targeted incrementally rather than comprehensively, implemented through multistakeholder arrangements rather than government structures, and designed in a low coercive manner rather than being a high coercive one.* Situating RoLAC as a representative case within a competitive personalized settlement, this study utilized a qualitative coding analysis with data from document analysis of RoLAC reports, and interviews to examine the impact of policy designs—specifically precision of targeting, involvement of actors, and degree of coerciveness—on the program's outcomes.

The findings reveal that RoLAC's limited success is tied to these factors. There is a high presence of its reliance on a comprehensive, regulatory-structured approach, emphasizing broad-based policies, which proved incompatible with Nigeria's structural realities, where vested interests and the use of state resources for personalized gains are prevalent. This was evident in the lack of political will, limited coordination, resistance among government agencies, and the predominance of discretionary power. The program's reliance on highly coercive instruments, such as regulatory mechanisms and compliance tools, highlighted its ambitious agenda. Such an agenda has been impeded by weak institutional capacity, low political commitment, and vested interests which impact its implementation. Issues like insufficient staffing, funding, and inter-agency conflicts, along with endemic corruption in the justice sector, further hindered progress. Key obstacles included nepotism, political interference, and lack of oversight in the judiciary. Despite these challenges, progress was observed in closing justice accessibility gaps for vulnerable groups through multi-stakeholder initiatives and interest-group funding. This aligns with the idea that, in

a competitive-personalized settlement, a society-centric, multi-stakeholder policy model is more effective than reliance on government structures constrained by limited capacity (Muhhina, 2023, p.449). However, this progress was hindered by the administrative incapacity of the criminal justice system, such as awaiting trial time which further limited RoLAC's impact. These findings highlight that an anticorruption instrument should be tailored to match the context-specific needs of the target country. This is essential, as the study indicates that a mismatch between policy instruments and the specific context will result in limited success. In the context of Nigeria, where the second phase of RoLAC is ongoing, measures should be incorporated to ensure the use of a society-centric approach in the fight against corruption. Funding for investigative journalism should be encouraged.

Moreover, the lessons from the RoLAC program extend beyond Nigeria to other contexts where the EU seeks to promote governance reforms. In an emergent multi-polar world where the EU's international role is being challenged, recognizing the diversity of political settlements and institutional capacities in partner countries is crucial for designing effective interventions. By adopting a more nuanced, context-driven approach, the EU can enhance its credibility as a governance promoter and increase the likelihood of achieving meaningful and sustainable reform outcomes. This transfer of norms and values should not be done in isolation from the target country. Equally, unambitious projects should be avoided. External governance should identify and target a minimal number of sectors with productive potential, which will encourage growth in such areas.

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Appendix A: Mapping of Nigeria's Competitive Political Settlement

The Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment (XRCOMP) is assessed across three categories: selection, dual/transitional, and election (see Marshall & Gurr, 2020, pp. 21–22). In 2017 and 2018, Nigeria was categorized under "election," scoring 3 (Our World in Data, n.d.-a).

The Openness of Executive Recruitment dimension is measured on a four-point scale: closed, dual executive-designation, dual executive-election, and open (election). In 2017 and 2018, Nigeria scored 4, falling under the "open" category (Our World in Data, n.d.-b).

The Executive Constraints (XCONST) indicator measures the extent of limitations on executive authority on a scale from 1 to 7. A score of 1 represents unlimited authority, while 2 indicates an intermediate category between 1 and 3. A score of 3 reflects slight to moderate limitations on executive authority, with 4 serving as an intermediate category between 3 and 5. A score of 5 signifies substantial limitations on executive authority, with 6 as an intermediate category between 5 and 7. Finally, a score of 7 represents executive parity or subordination, where the executive operates under equal or subordinate authority to other branches of government. In 2017 and 2018, Nigeria scored 6, indicating an intermediate level of substantial limitations on executive power (Our World in Data, n.d.-c).

The Competitiveness of Political Participation (PARCOMP) ranges from unregulated political participation (score of 0) to competitive political participation (score of 5), with intermediate categories including over-repressed (1), suppressed (2), factional (3), transitional arrangements (4) and competitive political participation (5). During 2017 and 2018, Nigeria scored 4, reflecting a transitional arrangement (Our World in Data, n.d.-d). This score indicates accommodating competition, though parochial interests were not fully aligned with national interests (Our World in Data, n.d.-d).

The following scale weights were applied to aggregate the scores, as outlined in the Polity 5 manual (Marshall & Gurr, 2020, p. 15).

Authority Coding

Scale Weight

Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment (XRCOMP):

(3) Election	+2
(2) Transitional	+1

Openness of Executive Recruitment (XROPEN):

only if XRCOMP is Election (3) or Transitional (2)

(3) Dual/election	+1
(4) Election	+1

Constraint on Chief Executive (XCONST):

(7) Executive parity or subordination	+4
(6) Intermediate category	+3
(5) Substantial limitations	+2
(4) Intermediate category	+1

Competitiveness of Political Participation (PARCOMP):

(5) Competitive	+3
(4) Transitional	+2
(3) Factional	+1

Aggregated in this way, countries that score 0-5 are categorized as “dominant”, and countries with scores 6-10 are categorized as “competitive.” Following this delineation, it is sufficient to say that the country falls under a competitive type between 2017 and 2018 with a scale weight of 8 (2+1+3+2) out of 10.

Drawing inspiration from Dawson's analytical framework helps to further delineate the years missing in the polity data by calculating the ex-post closeness which takes the absolute percentage point difference between the top two candidates in an election, and subtracting this value from 100 (Dawson, 2022, p. 802). In the 2019 presidential election, the All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate received 55.60% of the votes, while the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) candidate scored 41.21%. Using the formula, the difference (55.60 - 41.21) is 14.39, and 100 - 14.39 equals 85.61%. In the 2023 presidential election, the APC candidate garnered 36.61% of the votes, while

the PDP candidate received 29.07%. The difference (36.61 - 29.07) is 7.54, and $100 - 7.54$ equals 92.46%. This calculation highlights the increasing competitiveness of the country's political landscape.

Appendix B: Primary Documents for the Empirical Analysis

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Appendix C: Interview Guide

Introductory questions

1. Can you briefly describe your involvement with the RoLAC program in Nigeria?
2. In your view, how would you characterize the political and institutional landscape in Nigeria?

Policy designs questions

3. What was the major focus of the RoLAC program?
4. Which levels of government and agencies were the program targeted?
5. Based on your field experience, do you believe that targeting a small number of agencies, such as two or three, would have been more effective in addressing Nigeria's institutional challenges than implementing system-wide reforms?
6. What actors were actively involved in the implementation of the RoLAC initiatives?
7. How did the program engage various stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, government actors, and the private sector?
8. What initiatives and incentives did the RoLAC program employ to achieve its objectives?
9. Would you say the program primarily focused on facilitating agencies through grants, enlightenment and education rather than emphasizing the enforcement of regulations and policies?
10. How did this impact their reception and implementation?

Outcome Questions

11. Do you think the intended objectives of the improvement of the criminal justice system and the service delivery of criminal justice institutions have been achieved?
12. What are the changes observed at the level of the communities/effects and impact on vulnerable groups?
13. Can you please describe key AC achievements in terms of reforms, policies and strategies attained under RoLAC?
14. How will you rate the coordination among Anti-corruption Agencies?
15. What do you perceive as the main successes and limitations of the RoLAC program?
16. What factors do you think contributed to these outcomes?
17. What lessons can be drawn from the RoLAC experience for similar governance promotion initiatives in Nigeria?

18. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the RoLAC program's implementation or outcomes?

Informed Consent Form (for participation in academic research)

Project Title: Using the Political Settlement Framework to Analyze External Promoters' Anti-Corruption Efforts: The Case of RoLAC in Nigeria (2017–2023)

After reviewing the participant information sheet (attached below) of the project, I understand the purpose and procedures outlined. I have been informed of any known or potential risks, inconveniences, discomforts, or side effects associated with my participation, as far as the researcher is aware.

I acknowledge that my participation in this study involves taking part in a recorded interview, either audio or video, with questions related to the RoLAC program in Nigeria, implemented by the British Council and sponsored by the EU.

I understand that the data collected during the interview may be shared through the University of Tartu's communication channels and will be used to support the research writing. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and am satisfied with the responses I have received.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study and am aware that I can withdraw at any time without any impact on my current or future relationship with the researcher. I agree to respect the confidentiality of the interview.

Name/Pseudonym: (print name) _____ Signature:

_____ Date/Location: _____

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Using the Political Settlement Framework to Analyze External Promoters' Anti-Corruption Efforts: The Case of RoLAC in Nigeria (2017–2023).

Purpose of the Study: This study aims to examine what factors were at play in the EU governance promotion efforts particularly the RoLAC program in Nigeria.

Procedures: Participants will be asked a series of interview questions about their experiences and perspectives on the RoLAC program in Nigeria between 2017 and 2023.

Duration: The interview will last for about 30-40 minutes.

Risks and Benefits: To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no known risks associated with participation in this study. However, the study offers several potential benefits. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of governance promotion efforts, particularly anti-corruption initiatives like the RoLAC program. The findings of this study may also inform future policy and program development, potentially enhancing the impact of similar initiatives in Nigeria and beyond.

Confidentiality: All data collected will be kept confidential and stored securely. Upon completion of the study, they will be deleted. Participants' identities will be anonymized in any published results.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time.

Contact Information: For more information or to address any concerns, please contact the research team at chimelue@ut.ee

Interview participants

Interview 1: A member of Civil Society Organization, Date of interview: 3, December 2024;
Location: via Zoom

Interview 2: A lawyer and member of Nigerian Bar Association, Date of interview: 11,
December 2024, Location: via Zoom

Interview 3: A lawyer and member of Civil Society Organization, Date of interview: 23
November 2024, Location: via Zoom

Appendix D: Coding frame

Coding frame for “Using the Political Settlement Framework to Analyze External Promoters' Anti-Corruption Efforts: The Case of RoLAC in Nigeria (2017–2023).”

No	Main category codes	Subcategory codes	Description of subcategory codes/indicators	Examples of contextual quotes	Frequency: how time the specific code occurred
x	A label of the main category code	A label of the subcategory code	Definition of the code, and what the code is supposed to include or exclude	1 example directly from the data that fits in the code	
1	Precision of target	Incremental Targeting	Policies with a limited institutional scope are observed as reform targeting 1-3 institutions or agencies.		
		Comprehensive Targeting	Policies aiming for system-wide changes are measured as reform affecting 6 or more institutions or agencies. In addition to the Involvement of federal, state, and	RoLAC engaged with 137 individual stakeholders (46 agencies) at federal level and 73 individuals (42	26

			local government tiers.	agencies) at state level.	
2	Actors involved in the implementation	Multistakeholder (principal-principal)	When present two or more classes of actors (government, civil society, and international partners) are involved in implementing the initiative. Emphasis is placed on the inclusion of Civil Society Organizations key actors.	RoLAC worked with government agencies and civil society partners, to identify capacity gaps that affected their individual and collective capacity to respond to SGBV and assist survivors in accessing health, psychosocial and justice services	10
		Government structure (principal-agent)	When present, government institutions maintain oversight responsibilities and	The primary goal of the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption	18

			<p>implementations.</p> <p>Heavily reliance on formal government structures for execution.</p> <p>Limited inclusion of non-state actors in the initiative</p>	<p>(RoLAC) Programme's Anti-Corruption Component was to enhance the ability of Anti-corruption agencies to address corruption in key areas including criminal justice.</p>	
3	The degree of coerciveness of an initiative	High coercive	<p>initiatives supporting high-coercive tools are associated with government regulatory mechanisms, such as reviewing, adopting, or enacting legislation and policies, implementation frameworks or strategies that mandate specific behaviors or</p>	<p>RoLAC developed guidelines, practice directions, resources, tools, and structures to implement ACJL provisions.</p>	15

			standards. These tools are authority-based, requiring adherence to regulations backed by robust enforcement mechanisms.		
		Low coercive	Initiatives supporting low-coercive tools are characterized by issue-specific civil regulation, often relying on financial stimuli such as subsidies or grants to encourage voluntary compliance and address specific issues. These tools are marked by minimal oversight and enforcement.	Grants were awarded to community based CSOs to establish additional reporting and referral channels and to strengthen the capacity of communities to recognise SGBV.	7
4	Outcomes of Initiatives	Success	improvements in anti-corruption efforts, institutional strengthening, or governance reforms.	SARCs supported over 31,000 survivors of SGBV between	6

			<p>This includes reduced case backlogs, faster trial timelines, increased transparency in judicial processes, enhanced legal access for WCP groups, improved ACA coordination with a reduction in corruption, and active participation by civil society and private sector actors in anti-corruption reforms.</p>	<p>July 2017 and November 2022.</p>	
		Limited Success	<p>moderate progress in program objectives with lingering challenges. This includes: some progress in accessibility for WCP groups with limited scope. Moderate level of trial timelines in justice delivery with inefficiencies like</p>	<p>the support of the programme have prompted the thinking of most of the actors to do more to address corruption [...], However, this has not guaranteed the continuous use of those tools</p>	25

			delays. Moderate ACA coordination with minimal impact on corruption, and marginal engagement by civil society and private sector actors	to bring about collaboration among ACA. the number of SGBV cases being prosecuted and convicted remains low compared to reported cases	
		Status Quo Reinforcement	No improvement in case handling; delays continue unabated. ACAs coordination remain unchanged, with unchecked corruption. No participation from civil society or private sector in anti-corruption reforms.		

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